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**FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II**

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 208**

SECOND VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Monday 18 May 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

SELECTION

Ordered,

That Mr. Archy Kirkwood be a member of the Committee of Selection.

That the member of the Committee of Selection nominated this day shall continue to be a member of the Committee for the remainder of this Parliament.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Estuarial Crossings

1. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to review his policy concerning tolls on estuarial crossings.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): We see no reason to change the view taken by successive Governments over many years that it is reasonable for major estuarial crossings to be tolled. Such crossings are often exceptionally expensive and confer exceptional benefits on their users.

Mr. Griffiths: The Minister's reply is extremely complacent. Has he ever tried crossing the Severn bridge from England into Wales during the rush hour? If he does, he will find that there are hours of delays, confusion and chaos, and will realise that the whole new system of charges is unfair to all users—particularly to those such as private van users. Does he realise that many people in Wales regard the new charges as a conspiracy foisted on Wales by the English tourist board and the Department of Trade and Industry in an attempt to discourage visitors and industry from going to Wales? May I prevail on him to review the charges urgently?

Mr. Freeman: The Welsh economy—and, indeed, that of England—needs a second Severn bridge quickly. Private sector provision of a bridge costing £300 million, with associated road systems costing £200 million, will be good for Wales and good for Britain. Moreover, the bridge will be built more quickly than it would be if it were provided by the public sector alone.

Cycling

2. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to encourage safer cycling.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): We shall continue to provide support and technical advice to local highway authorities on traffic engineering techniques to help cyclists and shall undertake publicity and other initiatives as the opportunities arise.

Mr. Waller: As I am sure my hon. Friend will agree, cycling is an extremely healthy and environmentally friendly activity, but, unfortunately, the casualty rate is far higher than it should be. Will he encourage local highway authorities, when developing their future plans, to incorporate dedicated cycle tracks and other means of making cycling as safe as humanly possible?

Mr. Carlisle: My hon. Friend makes some good points. We are anxious to promote proper and dedicated cycle routes in our towns and cities and our regional cycling officers—who exist in every region—are working hard with local authorities to promote such routes. Good schemes are available in a number of our cities, including Exeter, Nottingham and Cambridge.

Ms. Walley: Does the Minister realise that we need an integrated approach to transport which includes cycling and accepts its importance? Does he agree that 47 per cent. of local journeys could be made by bicycle? Will he now make it a priority within his Department to enable local authorities to plan for cycling, because, if he does not, it will be clear that the Government do not have the political will to get the nation on its bike?

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Lady obviously did not listen to what I said. We are working closely with local authorities to develop cycle routes. I suggest that the hon. Lady goes away and reads some of our traffic advisory leaflets or local transport notes, which explain just how we are working with local authorities to make life easier for cyclists.

London Underground (Crime)

3. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the measures taken by the Government to combat crime on the London Underground.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): Serious crime on London Underground has fallen by 40 per cent. over the past three years. The police presence has been increased and London Underground has mounted a programme of introducing video cameras and other security measures at selected stations. I welcome the progress that London Underground has already made and I share its commitment to see crime levels reduced still further in future years.

Mr. Booth: Since the Northern line was the first underground railway to be constructed in London and as it is taking a long time to repair and reform it, will my hon. Friend say what is to be done on the Northern line to combat crime and to introduce other forms of investment?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend will find that the Northern line will figure significantly in his constituency correspondence. It is fair to say that in the past the Northern line had a worse reputation than it now enjoys. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report specifically refers to the improvements that have been made to the Northern line and that line is the major investment project that London Underground will undertake after it has completed work on the Central line.

Mr. Cohen: May I congratulate the Minister on his appointment? Did he read about the appalling case of male rape that took place on the London Underground in recent weeks? Does he agree that both men and women could be victims of sexual assaults on certain parts of the underground because they are unsafe? Will he call for a full review of safety for passengers so that there is video camera surveillance and staff who can supervise the video cameras and also act if assaults occur?

Mr. Norris: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks. I quite understand and appreciate his concern about an appalling crime recently committed on a young man on the underground. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will consider that crime in the context of a very considerable reduction in crime on the underground including, thankfully, a substantial reduction in violent crime. It is worth reminding the travelling public that the precautions that are appropriate when travelling anywhere in a large city are just as appropriate even now on the London underground.

Mr. John Marshall: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on his appointment. Would he and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State be willing to come and savour the delights of the Northern line? Its reputation is not quite as high as my hon. Friend indicated.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister cannot get his BMW down the Northern line.

Mr. Norris: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. I certainly intend to savour the delights of the Northern line, whether or not the car park is large enough to accommodate any particular type of car.

Ms. Ruddock: I congratulate you, Madam Speaker, and the Minister on your appointments. Has the Minister had an opportunity to consider, and does he endorse, London Underground's company plan which includes reducing staff by one quarter? That would mean a reduction of 5,000 people, many of whom are uniformed station staff whom we believe deter crime. How will that company plan help to reduce or continue to reduce the crime rate on the London underground?

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her kind words and for the opportunity to make it plain that the objective of the London Underground company plan is a more efficient, effective and safe rail system. The hon. Lady will know that the reductions in numbers are largely accounted for by the very substantially increased levels of investment. I am sure that she is also aware of the assurances that London Underground has certainly given to me that passengers will see an increased staff presence. There will be more frequent patrols of platforms. British Transport police will be deployed more effectively and video coverage will be extended.

Traffic Congestion

4. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to reduce traffic congestion in south-east Essex.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): My Department and Essex county council are preparing several schemes that will benefit south-east Essex directly or indirectly. These schemes will complement work already completed and bring about a progressive improvement in traffic flows on both trunk and county roads.

Dr. Clark: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his new appointment and wish him every success in his high office? Is he aware that Essex county council has been diligent in providing new roads and bypasses in the northern and central parts of the county where population is sparse, or at best moderate, but has not done so much for the south-east of Essex where there is heavy traffic and a great deal of congestion on the roads? Will he assist in redressing the balance by providing some funds for the Rochford bypass so that people may travel in and out of the Southend conurbation without bringing my constituency to a halt?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. He will know that the Rochford bypass scheme might be eligible for transport supplementary grant suport. It is, of course, for Essex county council to decide what priorty to give to schemes which it submits for TSG support. He will also be aware that we accepted 18 major schemes in Essex in the past 10 settlements, so the county has received significant grant support. The bids for next year's TSG are expected by the end of July. I shall, of course, give careful consideration to Essex county council bids, whatever they are, but, as the House will know, all major schemes must compete for funds nationallly on their merits. There are many more schemes than can be entertained in one year.

Mr. Mackinlay: Will the Secretary of State reflect that one of the best ways to reduce congestion in south Essex would be major funding of our clapped-out Fenchurch Street-Tilbury-Southend railway line which is universally considered to be an absolute shambles? Both sides of the House look to him for an early remedy. Will he consider that whatever happens to this afternoon's legislation, it will be irrelevant to the immediate needs of commuters and travellers in south Essex who want an immediate upgrading of that clapped-out railway line, which his Government have failed to fund for many years?

Mr. MacGregor: This afternoon's debate will not be irrelevant. It is important for achieving improved services that we go down the route that we propose for British Rail. So what we shall discuss this afternoon will be highly relevant.

Dr. Spink: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the need for a second exit road from Canvey island not only to relieve congestion but for sound safety reasons to enable the island to be evacuated in the event of another disaster such as the one that befell it in 1953?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already said that it is for Essex county council to decide on the priority given to such schemes. But Essex has received favourable settlements, given that on average some £16 million each year for the past 10 years has gone into its TSG support. However, we shall consider the priorities that Essex county council puts forward when it submits its bids in July.

Motorway Accidents

5. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his response to Professor James Horne of Loughborough university in relation to drivers' sleep as a cause of motorway accidents.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Experts differ on the extent to which fatigue is a cause of road accidents. We have recently received advice from the Medical Commission on Accident Prevention which we are currently considering.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the significant number of accidents that take place between 4 and 6 o'clock in the morning and the number of accidents involving moonlighting taxi drivers justify extra research funds?

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. Our Transport Research Laboratory is also investigating the problem to see whether we can understand it better. That is important. However, there is a commonsense answer, too—that people who feel tired simply should not drive or should stop driving for a little while. That is incorporated in "The Highway Code", rule 29 of which says:

"Do not drive if you feel tired or unwell."

Mr. Simon Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in order to ensure that motorists have an opportunity to stop their journey when they feel tired it is important that motorway service areas are available? In that context, will he take note that on the M4 there is no service area between Heston and Membury—a distance of 60 miles? That is exacerbated by the fact that many motorists join the M4 from the M25 where there are no services. This causes considerable problems. Will he consider the matter and let the House know what can be done?

Mr. Carlisle: My hon. Friend makes a good point. As he knows, we are studying the motorway service area system to decide whether it should be less regulated and whether a private approach would lead to more much-needed service areas. I agree that more service areas would make life easier for motorists who become tired.

Networker Trains

6. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress being made with the introduction of Networker 465 rolling stock on the north Kent line.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that nearly all the infrastructure works have been completed and that the first of the new trains will enter service during the summer. Last month Network SouthEast ordered a further 188 Networkers to complete the replacement of the Kent link rolling stock.

Mr. Arnold: My hon. Friend will know that people in north Kent welcome the arrival of those carriages, especially as we have had to put up with cattle truck conditions for many years. They note that deliveries of Networker trains are now taking place, and bear in mind the fact that at the last election they were told that they had not even been ordered.

Mr. Freeman: I assure my hon. Friend that the Government said earlier in the year that when British Rail had completed its corporate plan preparations, it would consider whether it could place an order, and it did so. Conservative Members are delighted that it was able to do so within the funds provided by the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is it true that the Secretary of State received a visit from the chairman of British Rail, who asked for a great deal more investment in rolling stock, and said that that was only one of the orders which are urgently required not only throughout the south-east, but throughout the railway system?

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular meetings with the chairman of British Rail while he is setting out his plans for the next 10 years. During this year's public expenditure survey discussions, I am sure that the chairman will be outlining what he sees as the needs for the next 10 years.

Mr. Dunn: The Minister's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) will be welcomed by

the people of Dartford, especially as they have had to suffer inadequate, elderly rolling stock for years—rolling stock so old that the graffiti says "Down with Attlee."

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I have visited Dartford station in his constituency and have seen the condition of some of the railway carriages and power units. My hon. Friend will know that the new Networkers will be of great benefit to all constituencies on the north Kent line.

Dr. Kim Howells *rose*——

Madam Speaker: We are dealing with north Kent, Dr. Howells.

Dr. Howells: Yes, I know. Will the Minister ensure that rolling stock coming on to the line in north Kent has safer door locks than the rolling stock on 125s and other high-speed trains? Will he review the fact that it seems that British Rail and the Health and Safety Executive are backtracking on previous cover-ups on deaths which occurred as a result of those faulty locks?

Mr. Freeman: The Health and Safety Executive is not backtracking or trying to cover up anything. In the past year it has carried out a detailed inquiry into the cause of death following falls from trains and I understand that it is to hold a press conference on Wednesday to outline its conclusions. I know that when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport receives the review by the Health and Safety Commission he will express his own views. That will be later in the summer. I am pleased that the executive is coming forward with clear conclusions, which will be unveiled on Wednesday.

Bus Deregulation

7. **Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effect bus deregulation has had on route coverage.

Mr. MacGregor: The deregulation and privatisation of bus services has resulted in a 19 per cent. increase in bus mileage with many new services to areas not previously served by buses. Operator costs have been reduced by more than a third and local authority subsidies have been halved.

Mr. Ancram: While I welcome my right hon. Friend's reply as a further sign of the success of the Government's bus deregulation policy, is he aware that in certain rural areas the improvement in bus services has not been totally commensurate with the figures that he has given? Has his Department any plans to encourage private operators to consider new initiatives, such as dual service systems like post buses, to provide much-needed bus services in rural areas?

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend knows, my constituency consists of large rural areas similar to those that he has described. For some years we have experimented with post buses, community buses and so on. There are particular problems in far-flung rural areas where there is increased car ownership, because the minority who do not have cars are left behind. That is why one needs innovative rural transport schemes of the sort that my hon. Friend suggests. The Department provides up to £1 million a year to the Rural Development Commission to encourage such schemes.

Mr. Roy Hughes: What good is deregulation when buses have to pay heavy tolls to cross the Severn bridge to go into Wales? Is not that highly detrimental to the Welsh tourist trade? Besides which, such tolls are no encouragement to people to use public transport, a policy which the Government espouse from time to time.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend has already dealt with the question of tolls, which has nothing to do with deregulation. The key to assisting the tourist industry in Wales and elsewhere is for the second Severn crossing to be built as quickly as possible. The increase in tolls will help to do that.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Hoppa buses are not suitable for disabled people because access to them is difficult? Will he encourage the private companies that use Hoppa buses to undertake an investigation to see whether better access for such people can be arranged?

Mr. MacGregor: I know of my hon. Friend's interest in this and the point that he has made has already been expressed to me by a number of people since I became Secretary of State. I, too, have a particular interest in assisting disabled people. We are currently considering this issue in exactly the way in which my hon. Friend suggests.

Leicester Eastern Bypass

8. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has now received the report from Travers Morgan into the proposed Leicester eastern bypass.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. Preliminary investigations are continuing.

Mr. Vaz: I have no doubt that the Minister is aware of the enormous hostility by the residents of the eastern part of the city of Leicester to the establishment of the eastern district distributor road, the EDDR, by the county council. Will he confirm that his Department has forwarded to Travers Morgan the new proposals that have been put forward by community groups—the Henwood proposals—which would seek to amalgamate the EDDR with the eastern bypass? Will he also give a commitment to the House that the Government will establish an eastern bypass before the end of the century?

Mr. Carlisle: I recognise that the eastern bypass for Leicester is important for the entire community. However, one must also recognise that the eastern district distributor road is basically local. Studies have shown that it would carry 90 per cent. of local traffic and therefore 10 per cent. only of trunk road traffic. The whole point of the eastern bypass is to form a strategic trunk road to carry traffic from the A6 to the A46.

British Rail (Funding)

9. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport it he has reached any conclusions on the future funding of British Rail.

Mr. MacGregor: British Rail and the Government will be discussing BR's funding for the next three years as part of this year's public expenditure discussions. Current levels of investment in BR are the highest for 30 years.

Mr. French: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Can he specify how substantial BR's investment programme has been in the past five years? Can he give us an estimate of how much it needs to be in the next five years in order to maintain and improve rail services to the standard and quality required by the public?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall certainly say something about that later this afternoon. I cannot, of course, comment on the next five years, because, as I said, such funding will be included in the discussions that I will have in the summer and will be part of the public expenditure survey. My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the past five years, when more than £4 billion in real terms was invested. That money represents capital investment alone and leaves aside other public sector funding for BR.

Mr. Bennett: Can the Secretary of State confirm that unless BR gets more money it will have to go in for more railway closures? Will he consider carefully the farcical procedures that are going on now in Greater Manchester where BR first reduced the frequency of trains on a particular line to one train in one direction per week and then went on to undertake the statutory closure procedures? Does not that make a nonsense of those procedures? Surely the inquiry should be held when BR starts to reduce the frequency of a service rather than when it cuts it to the bone.

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot comment on that particular case, because that is a matter for British Rail. However, the statutory procedures have been in operation for a long time and have operated well. Under the proposals that we shall put before the House for the privatisation of British Rail and the injection of more private sector involvement, those procedures will broadly remain intact.

Mr. Adley: My right hon. Friend is invited, in the question, to draw conclusions. What conclusions does he draw from the following proposition? The best railways in the world are probably those, in France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland, to name but four, that are in the public sector and the worst passenger railway in the world is probably in the United States—it was so bad that the American Government had to nationalise it.

Mr. MacGregor: I draw a variety of conclusions from that, but I shall tell my hon. Friend just two. First, other countries are looking at the proposals that we shall debate later today and later in the Session. Secondly, when one makes comparisons with France—I have been looking at this thoroughly—one of the questions that have to be asked is whether the taxpayer is getting a good deal from that massive investment, given the resulting huge debts that are incurred by the railway network in France. If the financial situation here were as it is there, many questions would need to be asked about whether we were getting value for money.

Mr. Prescott: I wish to offer my welcome to the Secretary of State. I hope that he stays in his new job a little longer than the previous seven Secretaries of State in the past 13 years have done.

Has the right hon. Gentleman read, among his early readings on railway finance, the British Rail report "The Next Decade"; if so, can he confirm that British Raill wants £1 billion of investment every year for the next 10 years? I refer him to today's Library report, which clearly shows that the British rail system is the least-funded, most under-invested railway system in Europe.

Mr. MacGregor: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome, and I look forward to a number of encounters with him. I am not sure whether to say that I hope that he will be in the same post for many years ahead.

As to the hon. Gentleman's question, if he is referring to taxpayers' finance and public sector funding, I have already said that if one makes comparisons with other countries, one can draw many lessons other than simply that more money needs always to be pumped into the system by the taxpayer. As to investment, at this point I cannot comment on the next 10 years. At the appropriate time, I shall comment on the next three years. About £1 billion was invested for capital expenditure in 1991-92, and we expect £1·5 billion to be invested this year.

Mrs. Gorman: I congratulate the Government on the amount of money that they have undoubtedly put into the railway system, which includes many excellent long-distance services. However, will my right hon. Friend continue pursuing the possibility of using more private money, most particularly for the Fenchurch Street line —which services part of my constituency—to which the Government gave a generous £50 million grant just before the last recess and which is looking forward to the possibility of private capital taking over and running that line?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend that that happened just before the last recess, and we have seen continuity of policy since then. I would not wish to comment this afternoon on a particular line in the context of private sector finance, but my hon. Friend made a general point about private sector finance and I therefore assume that she will be an enthusiastic supporter of the proposals that we discuss this afternoon.

Ireland (Transport Links)

10. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding transport links between Great Britain and Ireland.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not received any. The previous Secretary of State did, however, receive many.

Mr. Foulkes: What is the Government's response to the proposal now emanating from the European Commission that Dublin-Holyhead should be developed as the principal surface route between Great Britain and Ireland? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that if that results in any downgrading of the Stranraer-Larne link, it will have serious political as well as transport implications?

Mr. Norris: The Government generally welcome the drawing up of outline plans as a framework for further discussion. British officials are playing a full part in the Commission's high-level working group, which was set up to consider priorities for the proposed development of a high-speed network. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of

the statement made last year by the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland, for Scotland and for Transport, which confirmed that the Commission's proposals would have no downgrading effect on the Stranraer-Larne service.

Mr. John D. Taylor: As 95 per cent. of Ulster's commerce and 30 per cent. of the Republic of Ireland's commerce use Larne-Stranraer as the main route between the island of Ireland and Great Britain, surely the Minister will accept that there is much resentment throughout the west of Scotland and Northern Ireland at the fact that the Commission is recommending an investment of £500 million on road and rail transport systems to enhance the Holyhead-Dublin route and to take over from the Larne-Stranraer route? When do the Government intend to respond to the Commission's recommendation? Will the Minister agree to meet an all-party delegation of Members from the west of Scotland and Northern Ireland before the Government make a response?

Mr. Norris: As I said earlier, our officials are studying the Commission's draft proposals. As I also said, the effect of the proposals is not in any way to downgrade the viability of the Stranraer-Larne service. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman is making the very point that Secretaries of State have stressed in the past, which is that the commercial viability of the route remains an attractive incentive to British Rail to continue to operate it. I shall draw to the attention of my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping the right hon. Gentleman's desire to bring a delegation to see him.

Network SouthEast

11. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about Network SouthEast's achievement of its passenger services performance targets; and what progress is being made with investment in the Kent link line.

Mr. Freeman: For the first four months of this year, 13 out of 15 Network SouthEast routes performed above the threshold for compensation after January for season ticket holders. Kent link did not. The introduction of Networkers will help British Rail to maintain better reliability and punctuality.

Mr. Merchant: Is my hon. Friend aware that although the majority of the travelling public in south London welcome the Government's steps to improve the quality and level of services, services on the Orpington to London line are still unacceptable? What pressure can be brought to bear on BR to improve the service?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the welcome that he gave the passengers charter, which has been a success. It is part of the Government's initiative with the citizens charter—*[Interruption.]* It has been a great success. To hasten improvements on the line in my hon. Friend's constituency, I shall write to the chairman of British Rail and ask him to invite my hon. Friend, myself and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to ride on the first Networker service from Orpington.

Mr. Snape: If the passenger service targets are such a success, as the Minister says, why are they not extended to private enterprise airlines, which have aircraft taking off from and landing at private enterprise airports, or even to private enterprise bus companies, many of which have timetables that are shrouded in mystery? Why is it that only the public sector, including British Rail, has the benefit of this "success"?

Mr. Freeman: That is because the private sector provisions for transport have performed extremely well, with the deregulation of buses, the privatisation of British Airways and the privatisation of the long-distance coach market. We have seen an enormous increase in the quality of travel and of services provided by the private sector. We intend to bring the same benefits to British Rail.

Mr. Sims: As a frequent critic of Kent link, I commend Network SouthEast for the frank way in which it is publicising the fact that it is failing to live up to its own standards. Is my hon. Friend aware that my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant), along with others, want a reliable service, which would mean fewer delays and cancellations? The prospect of some discount at some future date is small compensation for missed business appointments and family engagements.

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right and that the travelling public want a reliable and less overcrowded service. Certainly, reliability will be improved by the new trains, by the completion of signalling work in south-east England and by the completion of the channel tunnel preparatory works, which have complicated Kent link services. I agree with my hon. Friend that reliability is the key. I very much hope that when the time comes for discounts for season ticket holders, there will be no such payments because British Rail will have met all the targets.

Jubilee Line

12. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future construction and funding of the proposed extension of the Jubilee line.

Mr. MacGregor: All the Government's and London Underground's planning for the Jubilee line extension has proceeded on the basis that Olympia and York will make the £400 million cash contribution, as pledged, towards the cost of the project. I am therefore looking to Olympia and York to honour that undertaking before I can give London Underground approval to start construction.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Secretary of State give the House today an unconditional guarantee that the line, as approved by the House and as planned with all the stations, will go ahead? If Olympia and York or the liquidators do not come up with the money to fund the line, will the Government come up with it? Who was it who did a deal with Olympia and York, but never got it to sign the agreement, let alone pay the first instalment?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman knows that the Government have committed £1,500 million to the Jubilee line extension. It is right to look to the private sector to contribute to the cost of the line, as it will be a substantial beneficiary of it. I envisage no prospect of my authorising the start of construction until and unless the agreed contributions are assured.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Civil Research and Development

30. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much Government funding will be for civil research and development for 1992-93.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): Government funding of civil research and development for 1992-93 is expected to be just over £3 billion, an increase in real terms of more than 2 per cent. over last year.

Mr. Williams: I congratulate the Minister on his new appointment. I also congratulate the Government on the establishment of a new Office of Science and Technology. As the right hon. Gentleman has a distinguished academic background, will he examine the condition of British science and look at the international comparisons for funding research and development, an area in which Britain is falling further and further behind competitor countries?

We need to spend more on research and development and to change the emphasis from defence to civilian R and D. We also need to place a much higher value on the work of research scientists, on which we depend for the seedcorns of future industrial prosperity and an improvement in the quality of life.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the welcome that he gave my appointment and the establishment of the Office of Science and Technology. This is an important step in raising the profile of science and technlogy and will bring together our capacity to make a proper strategy for science and technology.

In the past, the problem has been one of not enough research and development in the private sector. Our public sector contribution stands up well to comparison, although I am glad to say that that, too, has been improving. There is also more private sector research and development now.

Mr. Brooke: I join the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) in welcoming my right hon. Friend to his new post. Given the wide variety of demands on the science budget, is he minded to consider changing the determination of priorities in the way that that money is spent?

Mr. Waldegrave: Now that we have a new opportunity with the establishment of the Office of Science and Technology, it would be right for us to consult widely and to discuss with the science community whether there should be changes in the advisory structure. At this point, I have no bias one way or the other. I shall be consulting widely and discussing with the Royal Society, research councils, university scientists and others what they think might be the best way forward.

Mr. Pike: Does the Chancellor of the Duchy accept that far too much research and development is still being transferred overseas—largely as a result of the Government's failure to recognise the importance of this country's manufacturing industries and of research and development remaining here? When will the Government do more to keep Britain at the sharp end of new industries, high technology and export markets?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not mean to talk down our science-based industries. In my previous post, I saw a great deal of the British pharmaceutical industry, which is perhaps the strongest in the world for a country of our size, with a balance of payments surplus of £1 billion annually. This country has great strengths, and we should learn from them in trying to improve performance in industries that may need more work.

Dr. Michael Clark: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the disappointment felt by several right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House that important aspects of funding for civil research and development are interspersed with others, however important, such as the citizens charter? Has my right hon. Friend noted that today's Order Paper contains only five questions about science but 14 about other matters for which he has responsibility? Will he give an undertaking to the House and to the science community that his time, effort and attention will be devoted more generously to science than is reflected by the ratio of science questions to other questions on today's Order Paper?

Mr. Waldegrave: The ratio of science questions is a matter not for me but for right hon. and hon. Members who table questions—and the lottery. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House—who is in his place and will have heard my hon. Friend's remarks—will respond to any request for change. That there is now a Cabinet Minister with responsibility for answering science questions is to be welcomed.

Dr. Bray: I welcome the Minister to the Office of Science and Technology, which was proposed by Labour, rather than by the Conservatives. Is he aware that unless he and the President of the Board of Trade find some way of rapidly increasing our technological competitiveness, this country will find itself facing another deep depression in the latter part of the 1990s? Given that increased basic research intensity as a percentage of gross domestic product is an essential element in increasing technological competitiveness, what is the right hon. Gentleman doing about it?

Mr. Waldegrave: In fact, we did not adopt Labour's proposal. That proposal was for a Minister for Science, but outside the Cabinet, which was a poor suggestion. We have done rather better. As to what action we are taking, the hon. Gentleman knows very well that we are increasing science expenditure in real terms over the next three years. The hon. Gentleman surely welcomes that and recognises, as I do, that the fact that Britain's share of world trade has been gaining for the first time in the past three years shows that things cannot be as bad as he thinks.

Science Budget

31. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the projected changes in the science budget for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Robert Jackson): The science budget for which my right hon. Friend is responsible is projected to rise from £1,050 million in 1992-93 to £1,181 million in 1993-94 and £1,270 million in 1994-95. If the

sums transferred from universities to research councils are deducted, the year-on-year increases will be £54 million and £60 million.

Mr. Mans: I welcome my hon. Friend to his new post in the new Department. How does the science budget for this year compare in real terms with that of a decade ago?

Mr. Jackson: It is a substantial increase. The new Office of Science and Technology builds on healthy foundations. It has a 1992-93 science budget which is 25 per cent. larger in real terms than it was 10 years ago.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister not consider that an appropriate use for the science budget would be investment in the successes of this country's science industry? Is it not a tragedy that Britain's last semiconductor manufacturer, INMOS, is about to move its manufacturing base to France and Italy, because the French and Italians believe in investing in British successes but the British Government do not?

Mr. Jackson: It is important to ensure good links between our academic science base and industry, of the kind that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy said exists in the pharmaceutical sector. It is necessary for the private sector, which is in the lead in all those areas, to get involved and to be committed. We must keep open the science base, but it is not the Government's role to invest in near-market research and development of a kind that we can expect industry to undertake.

Dr. Liam Fox: Will my hon. Friend confirm that there has been a net inflow of academic staff specialising in this subject over recent years and that that development shows that there is a sound underlying base of research and development in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Jackson: Yes. University statistical records show that there have been net inflows of academic staff from abroad over the past seven years, that the proportion of staff who leave for employment abroad is lower in the highest grades and that, since 1983, the professorial staff who leave have been outnumbered by those who have come here from abroad.

York Citizens Charter

32. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions the Government had with York city council about its citizens charter prior to the Government's introduction of their own citizens charter.

Mr. Robert Jackson: I have had no such discussions, but I congratulate York on producing its own charter. I have a copy of its fourth edition here. We would have made it tougher. Nevertheless, I welcome York's commitment to improving public services.

Mr. Bayley: Is the Minister aware that York city council was the first public authority in the country to introduce a citizens charter? Each year, when it publishes its charter—it has just published its fourth—it reports on the degree to which it met the standards laid down in the charter. Last year, it achieved a 93 per cent. success rate. The charter also spells out the action that the council intends to take when it has failed to meet those standards.

Will the Minister take a leaf out of York's book, and do the same when the Government republish their citizens charter? Will that charter state where there has been success and where there has been failure and specify the action that the Government will take to ensure that any failure will be put right?

Mr. Jackson: The fact is that, so far, the Labour party has been somewhat ambivalent about the citizens charter. I am happy to welcome the claim to priority of invention made by York's Labour council as a token that Labour is prepared to work with us to advance the principles of the citizens charter.

As I said, I have looked at the York citizens charter. It constitutes a worthy statement of good intentions, but it does not go far enough. The essence of the citizens charter approach that the Government are espousing is that there should be clearly specified targets—there are not many in the York charter—that there should be measures of performance against those targets; that there should be procedures for monitoring performance; and that there should be effective machinery for complaint and redress. All that is present in the Government's approach, although it is in embryo form and needs to be strengthened.

Citizens Charter

33. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the implementation of the citizens charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House on 6 May, the citizens charter will be at the centre of the Government's decision-making throughout the 1990s.

The Prime Minister is meeting ministerial colleagues and their permanent secretaries on 19 June to take stock of progress and to discuss further developments.

Mr. Arnold: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on becoming responsible for the implementation of the citizens charter from his position in the Cabinet. In the months ahead, will he ensure that, on the introduction of the charter mark, the very highest standards are set for it and that awards will be made exclusively on that basis?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can confirm that. As the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) pointed out, it is right for failings to be identified where they occur, but it is also right for outstandingly good performance to be recognised and rewarded. That principle will lie behind the charter mark.

Mr. Winnick: If the citizens charter represents a right to know, will the Chancellor of the Duchy explain why documents that have remained classified for so long—I refer to the documents concerning the Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands—have not been put into the public domain? When I raised the issue with the Prime Minister in the House, he said that it was a matter for the right hon. Gentleman. May we know when he will make a policy decision? There is a good deal of information in the documents about which the public should undoubtedly know.

Mr. Waldegrave: As I believe I have told the hon. Gentleman before in the House, we are looking across the board at a range of areas in which there can be more openness. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will make an announcement tomorrow about the

publication of the membership of Cabinet committees and the guidance to Ministers, and documents concerning those matters will be available in the House tomorrow. None the less, the hon. Gentleman has raised an important matter. I shall look at it again and write to him.

Mr. Channon: I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend to his new duties. While he is carrying out his duty to increase standards of public service, will he take great care to talk to the chairmen of the nationalised industries and his Government colleagues in order to ensure that such ridiculous anomalies as, for example, are to be found in British Rail's charter—whereby some lines, including that to Southend, are treated far worse than others—are made a target for the Government and removed over the next few years?

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend's point is right. It is right to specify targets openly. Where they are found to be inadequate, that is only the first stage. One then has to improve them. This open and measurable approach is designed not just for the production of charters but for the provision of better services: to provide motivation both for the public and for the management of the services concerned to drive up standards.

Dr. Marek: Will the Chancellor of the Duchy confirm that the citizens charter will ensure that when any citizen goes to, for example, the Department of Employment or the Department of Social Security for grants, allowances or benefits he or she will be given advice at the same time about all the other grants and benefits to which he or she may be entitled? If the right hon. Gentleman cannot assure the House that that will happen, the citizens charter will remain so many empty words.

Mr. Waldegrave: Some of the improvements that have been made by the Benefits Agency and others have been welcomed on both sides of the House. However, the hon. Gentleman is right. The service provided to people when, in many cases, they are at their most vulnerable must be both friendly and courteous and give them the full information that they need.

Duchy Administration

34. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to visit the Bury, South constituency to discuss the administration of the Duchy.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no present plans to visit my hon. Friend's constituency but look forward to visiting the Duchy in the near future.

Mr. Sumberg: I welcome my right hon. Friend's appointment, but will he remember that, despite his more onerous duties as Chancellor of the Duchy, he still has the honour to speak for the great county of Lancaster in the House? Although Basildon rightly holds a place of warm affection in all our hearts, it is the Burys and the Boltons that determine who will rule Britain, so we hope that my right hon. Friend will be a very regular visitor to the County Palatine.

Mr. Waldegrave: The results in both the Bury constituencies were magnificent. On that occasion and many others, they led the way in the country. I look forward very much to trying temporarily to submerge my loyalty to the most ancient county of Somerset and to transfer some of it to Lancashire—temporarily, I have to say.

Government Secrecy

35. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what criteria he will employ in reviewing levels of secrecy required in government.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our presumption will be that information should be released, unless there are pressing interest reasons for secrecy.

Mr. Nicholson: As an occasional historian and a former civil servant, I welcome these initiatives that come under the citizens charter—in particular the announcement last week by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary about documents not disclosed under the 30-year rule and the statement today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy about Cabinet secrecy. Is he aware that this should be a first step and that in particular further attention should be paid to information regarding public health and safety?

Mr. Waldegrave: I welcome my right hon. Friend's comments. I believe that there is room for very great progress. There are, of course, real secrets and they must be guarded properly. However, in the past, secrecy has been used, I think the House will agree, for reasons that the House does not want to see operate in future.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I have an honest, considered response to my question? When reviewing levels of secrecy, is the Minister getting any response from civil servants in any of these Departments? When it comes specifically to evaluation reports produced for the Overseas Development Administration, can the Minister ask the ODA why it refused to publish the preliminary draft reports? Will he ensure that they are published in future, even if it means that civil servants object?

Mr. Waldegrave: On the latter point, I shall ask a number of questions around Whitehall, to which I shall add the hon. Member's question. On the former point, which is more fundamental, I do not believe that it is sensible nowadays to think of the civil service, or of the many thousands of civil servants, as holding different views from the rest of the community. Many civil servants know that traditional practices need to be brought up to date. In that regard, I am finding many allies, as well as some scepticism with which to contend.

Citizens Charters

36. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is planning to take to extend charter principles throughout the public service.

Mr. Robert Jackson: We intend to apply citizens charter principles throughout the public service and to ensure that those principles are put into practice and developed. In time, standards of service and value for money will be improved still further.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is not it encouraging that a number of charter-style initiatives have been taken by private sector companies which, with the work that my right hon. Friend is undertaking in government, promise a

revolution in service to the consumer? Would it be too novel to establish the principle that public servants are there to serve the public and that they should accord the public the same respect that any employee would be expected to accord his employer?

Mr. Jackson: I agree with my hon. Friend's second point; so, I am sure, do almost all public servants. Like my hon. Friend, I am gratified by the way in which charter principles have been adopted by firms in the private sector. Those principles are particularly appropriate where competition and customer choice are neccesarily limited, as they are in the public services. That is why we welcome the growing emphasis on defining more precisely what customers want, setting out specific targets for performance, monitoring performance against them and providing effective machinery for complaint and redress.

Statutory Instruments, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

ANATOMY (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Anatomy (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

BUILDING SOCIETIES

That the draft Building Societies (Member States) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Question agreed to.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you been consulted about the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill—a major Bill that affects the coal industry and British Rail? It is so vaguely drafted that, instead of the 100-clause Bill that the House has the right to expect, which would delineate its powers and responsibilities, it is being asked to consider a Bill that is vaguer than some of the European directives to which we object and which normally do not apply. Have you been consulted about this growing practice of the Government?

Madam Speaker: I have, of course, looked carefully at the Bill but it is not my responsibility to draw up legislation. The hon. Lady makes an interesting point, but I suggest that she catches the eye of the occupant of the Chair and raises it in the debate. I am sure that that would be the appropriate time to do so.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I doubt that there can be a further point of order once I have dealt with it.

Mr. Foulkes: You said——

Madam Speaker: Order. Is it a further or a new point of order?

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The hon. Gentleman is a bit slow today.

Mr. Foulkes: Yes, a bit slow this morning—this afternoon. *[Laughter.]* On a new point of order, Madam Speaker. Were you advised about the hybridity of the Bill, and, if so, what advice did you receive?

Madam Speaker: I have been advised about the hybridity of the Bill: the Bill is not hybrid. We can now proceed.

Orders of the Day

British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.34 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is short and has a single purpose, so I shall be brief in opening. I say to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) that essentially it is a technical measure. Comparisons with European directives or major Bills introducing the fundamentals of privatisation do not apply, and I shall explain that simply.

The Bill is an important first legislative step to bringing the benefits of the private sector and privatisation to the coal and rail industries. After dealing with the Bill, I shall devote the majority of my speech to the wider issues.

The Bill is similar to paving bills for previous privatisations—for example, electricity and water; it follows that pattern.

The Bill is very short, with only two clauses. Its sole purpose is to give British Rail and British Coal powers to take any steps necessary to prepare for privatisation. Clause 1 confers on British Coal and British Rail powers to act in relation to proposals for the transfer of their commercial activities to the private sector or proposals for the establishment of new arrangements for their other activities. In particular, it empowers them to consider and take advice on proposals for privatisation, to advise the Government on such proposals and to draw up plans for implementing such proposals. They will be able to employ external advisers to assist them in all those tasks.

Clause 2 gives the short title of the Bill, sets out the financial provisions and extends the Bill to Northern Ireland. The financial provisions deal with the source of any loans and clarify the destination of any repayments, should British Coal or British Rail require additional funding to meet costs incurred in preparation for privatisation.

However, as the financial memorandum makes clear, any expenditure incurred for that purpose will not be significant in relation to the total amount of public expenditure being incurred on these two industries, and will undoubtedly give the taxpayer good value for money. That is therefore all that the Bill does—it does not give British Coal or British Rail powers to implement any scheme of privatisation.

Mr. Joe Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the Secretary of State aware that the burning question in my constituency in relation to British Coal is not so much its privatisation as what will happen to the pension scheme and who is in charge of it, and whether the concessionary coal given to widows, pensioners and redundant miners will continue under a private owner? Is he saying that that has not yet been decided and that discussions will take place? If so, will they take place with representatives of the unions and the widows—or have the Government no policy on the question?

Mr. MacGregor: Obviously, they can be debated when we consider the privatisation proposals, but the short answer—my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy will deal with British Coal when he winds up the debate—is that we shall in principle be following previous privatisations. The pension arrangements for existing pensioners will be safeguarded.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): On that point, the Secretary of State may not be aware that the last Secretary of State for Energy gave an assurance in relation to pensions and concessionary fuel. He indicated that the Government would be taking on those two responsibilities and that they would not be transferred to the private sector. Has there been a change of policy or direction?

Mr. MacGregor: If the hon. Gentleman reads my words, he will discover that I said that we should be following previous practice. I gave a broad outline of our position, but, again, it can be considered in detail at the appropriate time. That issue is certainly not relevant to this Bill, as I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recognise.

I think that the House would wish me to go a little beyond saying merely what the Bill does and then sitting down, so I deal now with the purposes of privatisation and the benefits that it will bring. Privatisation is one of the Government's great success stories. It has been successful in so many different ways, in its scale——

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Oh, yes?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman says, "Oh, yes?", but the electorate only recently gave a resounding verdict on what we have achieved. It has been successful in its scale, in the benefits that it has brought to the customer through greater efficiency, innovation and wider choice, in the boost that it has given to wider share ownership and the way in which it has been copied around the world.

The sceptics said that privatisation could not be done. I well remember that, in the 1979 election and immediately afterwards, members of the Labour party said that it should not be done. No other Governments were doing it, they said—no doubt we shall hear that again today—but how wrong they were. The Government did it. We led the way and now even many non-Conservative Governments around the world have been seeking to learn how we did it and to follow suit.

Two thirds of the companies once owned by the state have been returned to private enterprise—46 businesses, employing about 900,000 people.

Mr. Dobson: Before or after?

Mr. MacGregor: We have given commercial freedom to major companies and to whole industries—freedom to thrive in the market place, away from the constraints of nationalisation.

Mr. Dobson: Was the figure of 900,000 before or after privatisation? Does the Secretary of State recall Mr. Cecil Parkinson promising people in the electricity industry wide-ranging new job opportunities, omitting to mention that, for large numbers of them, the jobs had to be in other industries?

Mr. MacGregor: There have been new job opportunities, and there have also been improvements in the productivity and efficiency of all the privatised industries. I anticipated the intervention by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). It shows that the Labour party still does not understand how one remains competitive in the modern world. Worse than that, he shows clearly that, in his mind, the original public sector industries were set up for the benefit of those working in the industries—the providers—and not to pay attention to the services for customers. One reason why there has been an improvement—and, it is true, a reduction in the total work force—is that the customer has a far better service or product as a result of privatisation.

Mr. Dobson: Will the right hon. Gentleman, if he is interested in making Britain a competitive economy, explain how it adds to British competitiveness to get rid of 500 scientists and research engineers in the electricity industry?

Hon. Members: They are elsewhere.

Mr. MacGregor: They may be making contributions elsewhere. That is perfectly true—[HON. MEMBERS: "In Sweden."] No, they are in other industries in the United Kingdom. We live in a dynamic economy, and we need people to move around. A particular research product does not remain for all time.

British Telecom and other industries have improved not only their productivity but their innovation and investment. The results are there for all to see. In British Telecom, there has been a substantial growth in telephones, payphones, telephone calls and performance, with a slimmer and more efficient work force. Prices are down 27 per cent. in real terms since 1984. That is a real sign of what has been achieved in BT. That is a benefit to a competitive economy and to all those who, in real terms, are now getting cheaper telephone services as a result of privatisation.

British Gas domestic prices are down by 13 per cent. since privatisation and electricity prices have gone down 2 per cent. in real terms in five years. Under Labour—the regime and approach of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras—they went up 22 per cent. in real terms because there was not a concentration on providing the best and most effective service.

In the transport sector, the achievements have been enormous. Our guiding principle has been the need to secure value for money, and to increase consumer choice and efficiency by promoting greater competition and calling on the initiative and enterprise of the private sector. The private sector has more than met that challenge in transport.

Since we privatised British Airways, productivity per employee has increased by more than 20 per cent. The National Freight Corporation was brought into the private sector through a management buy-out in 1982, and in the past five years, investment in the business has quadrupled. That has led to the first growth in turnover in real terms, with a twelvefold increase in pre-tax profits and an increase in total staff numbers after years of decline. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport remineded us at Question Time, we have seen what has happened with long-distance buses.

Every privatisation has different aspects and takes a different form—from stock market flotations of whole industries to management buy-outs of small companies. Common to all is the harnessing of the management skills, the financial disciplines, the entrepreneurial spirit and the

efficiencies of the private sector, and the removal of the constraints of public sector ownership and its monolithic structures.

British Coal and British Rail in their privatisations are likely to take different forms, but the objectives are clear. The time is right for British Rail and British Coal to go down that path and to reap those benefits.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The right hon. Gentleman is making comparisons. Will he tell us how he views the privatisation of the water industry and the question of consumer choice? Since privatisation, and in the years before, water charges have risen well above the rate of inflation. How does the Secretary of State compare that privatisation with the others to which he referred?

Mr. MacGregor: If the hon. Gentleman considers the situation facing the water companies, he will realise that, at present, the major factor affecting charges is their massive capital expenditure programme for the next 10 years—in great contrast to the cutting of capital expenditure that took place under the last Labour Government. We had to spend much of the 1980s repairing that cut, and the water industry is now going ahead with major capital investment to deal not only with the backlog of the past, but with economic growth and with the increasing number of environmental objectives that they have to meet.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I want to be able to support the measure that my right hon. Friend is trying to introduce today, and I strongly agree that many of the privatisations have indeed enabled industries to keep competitive in a modern world. Will he nevertheless agree that the investment criteria applied by his Department to roads as opposed to rail are one of the most worrying aspects and that any railway, whoever owns it, is likely to fail to be competitive unless his Department reconsiders those criteria?

Does my right hon. Friend also accept that, in the words of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, coach deregulation has had "horrendous" effects on pollution and congestion in London? Does my right hon. Friend recognise that there is a social aspect to the rail privatisation?

Mr. MacGregor: On the latter point, I do not think that the deregulation of coaches and congestion in London are necessarily directly linked. Consumers have increasingly chosen to go by coach. With increased prosperity, there has been greater demand and therefore more services. Inevitably, many people wish to come to London, but that is a separate matter from the way in which we deal with congestion in London. As my hon. Friend will know, much of the congestion is being caused by coaches bringing tourists from the European Community. We must cope with that, too, and we need a different solution. I am sure that my hon. Friend would not wish to argue, however—I certainly would not—that one way of dealing with London's congestion problems would be to return to the previous system and thus reverse all the benefits that we have achieved from the privatisation and deregulation of coaches.

My hon. Friend's first point raised very complex issues, and at some point—I do not think that today is the day to do it—I shall be happy to engage with him in a debate about the respective returns required from road and rail. I can assure him that my Department regularly surveys the matter and that I have been considering it myself since I became Secretary of State.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Secretary of State said a moment ago that privatisation can take varying forms. We may have rather more idea of the form that the privatisation of the railways will take than we have for coal. It may be unreasonable for us to demand today that the right hon. Gentleman spells out the precise approach that will be adopted to the coal industry but can he not give the House some idea of the Government's present thinking and whether any possible approaches can be ruled out at this stage?

Mr. MacGregor: I had intended to deal with that question—briefly for British Coal and at slightly greater length for British Rail. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for putting his question in that way, because he is right to say that this is not the day to go into detail—for reasons to which I shall come in a moment. I do, however, wish to outline broadly the way in which we intend to approach the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I should make progress——

Mrs. Dunwoody: On this point.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall give way to the hon. Lady, but not again for some considerable time thereafter.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I accept that the right hon. Gentleman regards the present Bill as a paving measure alone, but is he aware that those working in the railway industry would like some idea of what will happen to them in the future, because they have seen what has happened to their counterparts in other privatised industries?

Mr. MacGregor: One reason for the paving Bill is to enable us to engage in more detailed dialogue with British Rail and to enable BR to do its own studies. That is precisely why I want the paving Bill carried urgently.

I propose to deal with British Coal only briefly, both for the reasons that I have given and because it is primarily a matter for my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy to deal with in winding up. There will be plenty of other more appropriate opportunities to deal with the issues at length.

In our manifesto, we said that we would bring forward proposals for privatising the British Coal Corporation. British Coal has a long tradition and a fine record to be proud of—in technical and professional excellence, in mining, in improving productivity and safety. For years, however, the corporation has been artificially shielded from the real world by huge subsidies from taxpayers and electricity consumers. Since 1979, the Government have provided grant of more than £17 billion, which has enabled new investment in the coal industry of more than £7·5 billion and the provision of more than £6 billion in deficiency grant under the Coal Industry Act 1990 to extinguish the industry's accumulated losses as at 31 March 1990. While demonstrating the Government's substantial commitment to the industry over recent years, that expenditure is also testimony to the massive burden that the industry has been on the citizens of this country.

Following the financial reconstruction, British Coal has already demonstrated its ability to succeed, with profits of

[Mr. MacGregor]

£78 million in 1990-91, and a further profit is forecast for 1991-92. Privatisation will provide the spur to maintain that improvement. The Government are determined to press ahead with privatisation as soon as possible so that the industry can establish a secure future for itself based on the efforts of its own people and on commercial realities and to free the taxpayer and electricity consumer from the need to provide continuing cushioning.

Much preliminary work remains to be done within Government and in British Coal. Decisions on the future structure of the industry and timing of the privatisation have yet to be made. The Bill will ensure that the corporation can participate fully in the process of preparing for privatisation.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the Secretary of State accept that the coal industry in the private sector or the public sector will have great difficulty in continuing to survive in the United Kingdom if there continues to be a huge influx of subsidised coal from Colombia, South Africa, the United States of America and Australia? Will he have a word with the President of the Board of Trade, who is sitting beside him today, and see what can be done to stop that influx of coal, which is often subsidised and which will decimate the coal industry in the United Kingdom under whatever ownership the Secretary of State proposes?

Mr. MacGregor: No one could possibly argue that British Coal has not been subsidised, and quite a lot of the coal imports are unsubsidised. Therefore, the argument is more complex, but the point can be raised in other debates. I want to consider British Rail because I do not want to speak for too long today, but I want to cover my responsibility for BR.

British Rail cannot be privatised in the conventional way as it exists now, because it is making substantial losses.

Mr. Dobson: Why not?

Mr. MacGregor: Every time the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras intervenes in the debate, he shows how little he understands of what has been happening over the past 13 years and of the reality of the situation.

As it stands, there would be no buyers for BR en bloc. We are proposing a mix of outright sale and a much greater involvement of the private sector. We have two fundamental objectives: better services for the customer, not least from the very large investment that is now taking place, and a much greater injection of private sector disciplines.

The Queen's Speech makes it clear that we are committed to increasing the role of the railways in meeting the country's transport needs. The greater involvement of the private sector will help us to achieve that with its capacity and incentive to respond flexibly to the market place and by providing the stimulus of competition that the railways need and consumer choice that will attract passengers and freight customers.

Last Monday, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) claimed that our sole motive for privatisation was to get our hands on the proceeds from sales of assets. That is clearly nonsense. The benefits to customers that have resulted from our highly successful privatisation policies are plain for all to see.

The privatisation of British Rail is all about improving services through private sector management and efficiency and greater responsiveness to consumer demand. The policies for BR of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East offer no prospect of any change in the monolithic, nationalised industry structure and no ideas for getting better value for money, greater responsiveness to customers and improvements to services that passengers and freight customers want.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid Kent): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. MacGregor: No. I am anxious to make progress, and I have already given way on many occasions. I may give way to my hon. Friend a little later.

We want to encourage more traffic to use the railway system. However, it is nevertheless undeniable and realistic to state that the vast majority of traffic will continue to go by road. Ninety-three per cent. of domestic passenger traffic and 81 per cent. of all freight lifted goes by road. The rail share is 6 per cent. of passenger traffic and 7 per cent. of freight traffic. It is clear from those figures that, even if we could find a way of doubling the amount of traffic going by rail, the road system would continue to be of fundamental importance for our economic prosperity and for meeting the needs of industry.

I make that point to stress that there is a need to pursue both at the same time; that is why we are right to continue with the very substantial road-building programme that is currently being undertaken. Indeed, it is salutary to reflect that even a doubling of the volume of freight traffic handled by rail would be equivalent in a typical year to only one year's growth in road freight traffic. That shows the size of the challenge and the opportunities and demonstrates clearly that we shall continue to need substantial investment in roads. *[Interruption.]* If one talks to industry as I have done for the past 13 years, one finds that while, for a variety of reasons, it would like to see more freight that is appropriate for rail carried on the railway, the prospects are not unlimited and there will continue to be a need for massive investment in the road programme.

At a time of rising demand for transport services and increasing road congestion, and when our commitment to protecting the environment is ever more important, it makes sense to make the best possible use of our railway system. That is what we intend to do. The Government's continuing commitment to the railways has been underlined in recent years by support or record levels of investment. Current levels of investment in BR are the highest for 30 years. Investment stands at about £1 billion in 1991-92 and a further £1·5 billion is expected for 1992-93.

In the past two years, Network SouthEast has invested more than £700 million. Since 1986, more than 1,000 new vehicles have been delivered. On InterCity, the electrification of the east coast mainline was completed last year at a cost of some £475 million. So there has been, and there is now, massive investment.

British Rail itself has made significant progress and compares well in terms of efficiency in Europe. InterCity now operates without subsidy, and its passengers charter

will improve its responsiveness to customers. Those are all steps in the right direction towards a more modern and efficient railway for the future. I pay tribute to so much that has been achieved by the chairman and board of British Rail and the many dedicated people in management and the work force, but that is not enough to enable the railways to respond to the increasing demands of their customers and to provide the quality of service that their customers want.

The nationalised industry culture of which BR is currently a part cannot ensure the efficient organisation and delivery of services. The monopoly position of British Rail is outdated and provides insufficient incentives for the improvement of its performance. A different approach is needed. Hence the major new reforms outlined in our election manifesto.

Let me give the House the timetable. First, we need to proceed with this Bill with speed to enable us to work on many of the details of implementation for British Rail. Secondly, we shall spell out our proposals for the future of the railways in more detail in a White Paper which I aim to publish later in the summer. Then we shall introduce the main Bill in the autumn Session. But I make it clear now that our proposals will follow the principles set out in the manifesto.

First, we shall provide for the franchising of passenger services. Precise standards, including those of the passengers charter, will be specified in the terms and conditions. It will be my aim to achieve flexibility in the franchise structure, but with particular emphasis wherever possible on reflecting regional and local identities, the source of so much of the former pride in the railways.

Secondly, we shall sell British Rail's freight and parcels businesses and be ready to sell stations. Thirdly, we shall establish a rail regulator to ensure that all companies have access to the track, to award franchises and to ensure that franchisees honour the terms of their contracts. Fourthly, we shall reorganise British Rail's accounting and management systems, dividing the operation of track and infrastructure from the operation of train services. The operating side will continue to provide passenger services where these have not been franchised. Fifthly, we shall ensure that the railways inspectorate has full powers on safety standards.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On selling stations, will the Secretary of State clarify whether there is any foundation to reports that negotiations are currently being held on the sale of Edinburgh Waverley station?

Mr. MacGregor: I am afraid that I do not know the answer to that question. I shall have to write to the hon. Gentleman.

My proposals are the way forward for a sound and long-term future for the railways. Let me add two other important points. We recognise that many rail services meet an essential social need but rely on subsidy. We have made it clear, and I say it again today, that we shall continue to provide subsidy for those services where necessary. Similarly, as we made clear in our manifesto, our objective is to sustain the current national network. The arrangements for dealing with closures or the withdrawal of services that have been in existence for many years will be maintained.

Another important aspect of our policy is to liberalise access to the railway network for operators wanting to provide new services. British Rail has already responded positively to our request that it should give sympathetic consideration to proposals by private sector operators.

The first of the new services—an overnight service from London to Edinburgh, operated by the Stagecoach group—began on 11 May. A number of private companies have also expressed interest in providing rail freight services, including National Power and Hunslet Barclay.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is possible that, by franchising freight services, a much greater demand for such services will be brought into being than British Rail has been able to encourage? Will he give an undertaking that, when he designs new parts of the railway system, he will take into account that probable increase in freight, rather than the pedestrian and conservative estimates being used by British Rail?

Mr. MacGregor: On the general point, I agree with my hon. Friend and that is my hope and my objective. The interest already demonstrated by some private sector operators, as I have just told the House, shows that that is possible. I well recall estimates of what would happen when long distance bus services were privatised. When that happened, there was a substantial increase in such services, beyond many people's expectations. I cannot predict exactly what will happen, but I hope that private sector enthusiasm and flexibility on our side, especially on liberalisation, will help to achieve that.

Bearing in mind the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Kent (Mr. Rowe), I suspect that he has a particular subject in mind when he talks about new services. I hope to make an announcement on that matter before too long.

The next stage of liberalisation will follow implementation of the European Community directive on the development of European railways, which requires, from 1 January next year, rights of access to rail infrastructure for international groupings of rail operators and individual operators of international combined transport.

The third stage of liberalisation will come from legislation to be introduced later in the Session, and will provide greater access to the rail network for all types of domestic rail services.

In a debate last week, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East gave the House his views on what was wrong with the present system and how he might approach our proposals.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Where was the right hon. Gentleman during that debate?

Mr. MacGregor: I was otherwise engaged. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster made a splendid speech on that occasion. I have done the hon. Member the courtesy of reading his speech with care, and I am about to take up one or two of the crucial arguments.—*[Interruption.]* I am happy to assure the hon. Gentleman that the points I am making are my own, and he will soon see why.

For starters, I shall take him up on two matters. He said that, when public utilities were privatised, they could borrow from private sources, often at a cheaper rate. I am sure that that will surprise the chairman of British Rail, who told a Committee of the House that he preferred to borrow from the national loans fund than from private

[Mr. MacGregor]

sources, while it was a nationalised industry, because the rates were better. So the hon. Gentleman was wrong on that matter for starters.

Mr. Prescott: The right hon. Gentleman just cannot get it.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Member might at least establish the facts before he begins to engage in the argument. Let me explain——

Mr. Dobson: That supposes that the chairman was allowed to borrow.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall be coming to that; it demonstrates that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras understands little of these matters. Let me explain why to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, because it is crucial to his biggest misunderstanding, which I shall come to in a moment.

Nationalised industries are part of the public sector and benefit from the fact that everyone knows that the Government stand behind them. Their borrowing is treated as Government borrowing by the market. If we tot up and seek to control the total of Government borrowing—I hope that even the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East accepts that we must do so for macroeconomic reasons—we must include the nationalised industries. That is why they can borrow from the national loans fund more cheaply, but there are other substantial implications. Before I come to them, I must deal with the hon. Gentleman's second point.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I shall not give way.

We do not prevent the public sector from borrowing for investment purposes. It is nonsense to say so—such nonsense that I must quote the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, who said last week:

"Irrespective of whether the investment, public or private, is benefical to the economy, including the consequential effects of it, the Treasury rules prevent such investment taking place if the industry is in the public sector."—[*Official Report*, 11 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 656.]

Last year, the House passed a Bill increasing British Rail's borrowing powers from £1.1 billion to £3 billion. In 1992-93, as I have already said, British Rail is planning to borrow about £1 billion, most of which will be used for investment purposes. It will, in fact, invest more than that, but a large part of the borrowing will be used for investment purposes.

Mr. Prescott: From normal sources?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, the normal sources from which it can borrow.

It is nonsense to say that Treasury rules prevent such investment from taking place through borrowing if the industry is in the public sector. The fact is that a good deal of additional capital investment has taken place in British Rail as a result of such borrowing.

Of course the Government exercise some control over the nationalised industries' investment spending. I hope that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is not suggesting that the Government should not exercise any control over the spending, the borrowing and the external financial limit of the nationalised industries, because if he is, it will be considerable news to his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). Of course the Government exercise some control. The nationalised industries are part of the public sector, so they are not subject to the full disciplines of the marketplace. Therefore, Government control must be exercised.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: May I finish my point?

If the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East does not want the nationalised industries to be treated as part of the public sector—as a result, they could benefit from considerable injections of private sector finance—I hope that he will support out proposals to privatise them. While they are in the public sector, without full market disciplines, we must insist that those industries carry out a proper analysis of their investment proposals. We have made it clear how that appraisal must be done, and the borrowing must count as public sector borrowing. That brings me to the fundamental point that I want to put to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East.

Mr. Dobson: If it is the principle that every publicly owned body's borrowing is included in the public sector borrowing requirement, why is British Nuclear Fuels excepted from that requirement?

Mr. MacGregor: Every nationalised industry has an external financial limit. It has to be debated in the public expenditure round, and it appears in the public expenditure White Paper. When the scale of the external financing limit is such as that of British Rail, obviously it must be included within the public expenditure White Paper totals.

That brings me to the fundamental error of the position taken by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. He is prepared to accept one part—as far as I can see, one part only—of our privatisation proposals—the injection of private sector finance. The reason for that is clear. His answer to every issue is simple: spend more money, more taxpayers' money. When the Labour party tried to convince the electorate that the solution to every problem was to throw taxpayers' money at it, the hon. Gentleman promised to spend an extra £3,600 million. That was the calculation of the extra he promised in debates and speeches prior to the election. However, the hon. Gentleman's policies were rejected by the electorate. They chose to spend their money how they think best and did not choose to have the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues spend more of it for them.

That is why the electorate, among the many other things that they rejected in the Labour party's proposals before the country at the election, rejected the proposals for increased spending. That spending was based on the Labour party's then tax commitments, let alone its additional tax commitments had the hon. Gentleman had his way with regard to the injection of taxpayers' money into British Rail.

Mr. Prescott: The right hon. Gentleman has repeated another Tory untruth from the election about the £3,600 million. Can he tell us where that estimate comes from and what it is? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that every European publicly owned railway system borrows from the private sector? Why is Britain alone in refusing to allow its railway to do so?

Mr. MacGregor: Treasury rules obviously constrain us. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that, on top of all that British Rail and other nationalised industries can borrow through their external financing limits they should be able to go to the private sector to borrow whatever they wish?

Mr. Prescott: Why not?

Mr. MacGregor: Because, as there is a Government guarantee behind the investment and the Government have to underwrite borrowing, inevitably there is a potential commitment of public sector funds. Therefore, these would have to be added to the PSBR and to the public expenditure White Paper totals. Furthermore, the hon. Gentleman will find that some of his right hon. Friends will agree with what I have just said. What he has been advocating—I have been looking at his speeches, and I have a list of commitments here—adds up to £3,600 million. What he advocated again in his speech last week was more and more public sector or private sector investment in British Rail. The hon. Gentleman criticised us for apparently withdrawing £3 billion to £4 billion of subsidy from British Rail.

Mr. Prescott: The PSO.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, the PSO—the public service obligation. Therefore, the implication is that he will add a great deal to the PSO for starters.

Mr. Prescott: No.

Mr. MacGregor: That is typical of the Labour party. The hon. Gentleman makes great claims that we do not invest enough or give enough subsidy and implies to the electorate that the Labour party would spend more. However, when he is challenged, he says that the Labour party will not. No wonder the electorate got confused during the election campaign. They never understood just how big was the Labour party's commitment to extra public expenditure, but they knew that it was large. I read carefully the speech that the hon. Gentleman made last week; every bit of it was, by implication, a promise of further increases in public expenditure totals.

Mr. Prescott: So now we have it. The Secretary of State tells us that he knows that we have not made a commitment, but that he had made the assumption that we would replace the £3 billion PSO—the subsidy given for running the railway system. There was no commitment about that, as the right hon. Gentleman knows from our manifesto. We set out different ways to raise private money for private investment in the railway system, and I shall come to that. However, he is agreeing that there was no commitment, and that it was just another Tory lie.

Mr. MacGregor: I hope, although I know that this is a false hope, that from now on we shall not get criticisms from the hon. Gentleman that, over the years, subsidies have been low and British Rail has been under-invested, with the clear implication that the Labour party would increase the funds available for British Rail. That was not the only bit. There were commitments in various Labour party publications up to the election of public funding for high-speed rail links to the channel tunnel, extensions to Scotland, more buses, tubes, trains and lines for London, increased financial support for British Rail, extension of electrification and concessionary fare schemes for all areas.

The hon. Gentleman is typifying the approach with which we had to deal for months, if not years, before the election. We were criticised for not "spending enough" and the Labour party made all sorts of commitments. As we came nearer to the election, Labour spokesmen began to say, "This will happen as the economy can afford it." However, the clear implication was, as it was in the hon. Gentleman's speech last week, that we were not spending enough. I hope that we shall not hear from the hon. Gentleman this afternoon accusations that there is not enough public enpenditure going into British Rail.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: No, I shall not give way; I wish to end my speech soon.

I hope that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East will not suggest that allowing private sector finance to come in on top of the already substantial sums given through the normal public sector arrangements will allow British Rail to have more money without there being an effect on public expenditure totals. Let me tell him why I say that. He is seeing this as the way through his dilemma. He does not want to add to the apparent public expenditure total, but he wants more money for British Rail. He is pretending to take private sector financing out of public expenditure, but he cannot do so. He would not and could not in government, although he calls the Treasury rules nonsense, and he cannot even in opposition.

Mr. Rogers: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: No, I will not give way again.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The Minister has said that he will not give way.

Mr. MacGregor: The Labour party suggested that there were ways to get private sector finance into housing without it scoring against public expenditure. It had to make a pretty rapid retraction of that. There was a flurry of concern between the two shadow Treasury spokesmen and the shadow spokesman for housing.

A Labour spokesman—I quote from *The Times* of 5 February 1992—made this comment:

"We are not making any changes in the definition of the public sector borrowing requirement."

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) the former Secretary of State for Transport, wrote to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and challenged him to say whether that would be the position for the private sector finance scheme that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is talking about for British Rail. Of course, answer came there none. It is clear that the answer would not have been acceptable to the hon. Gentleman. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman becomes Leader of the Opposition, I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not try to take his place as Labour's Treasury spokesman. He shows a spectacular lack of understanding of financial and economic matters.

It is clear that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East has not given his endorsement to the plans of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East to change the PSBR rules. I do not want to intrude on

[Mr. MacGregor]

disputes in the Labour party, but it is no wonder that there are certain tensions between the right hon. and learned Gentleman and hon. Gentleman. It is clear that there are real disagreements.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I appreciate that it may suit the hon. Gentleman's present purposes to be seen as distinctive from certain of his colleagues in his principles. We recognise that it is now distinctive in the Labour party to admit to being a socialist. I appreciate that, in the era of the red rose, the hon. Gentleman wishes to be seen as the last of the red flag wavers. Like the red flag wavers who a century ago were required to walk in front of the newly invented motor car, the hon. Gentleman's waving of the red flag would serve only to slow down the transport system. That is why he is taking up one part of our proposals, but unfortunately, he misunderstands it entirely.

He fails to appreciate that what he advocates would not produce the extra income that he thinks it would. That is why it is right that we should be following through the proposals which were set out in the Conservative party's manifesto, which I have outlined today. We shall be pursuing them by means of a major Bill in the autumn to achieve a British Rail system which meets customers' requirements in this modern era, and which has a full injection of private-sector disciplines.

I look forward to the enactment of the Bill and to working in careful co-operation with British Rail. I look forward also to the active and constructive participation of British Rail in implementing our proposals for the railway industry. That is why I commend the Bill to the House.

4.17 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I have heard various Secretaries of State for Transport make the same speech from the Government Dispatch Box. They have not lasted long in the job, and the transport industry has been in a worse state at the end of their periods of office than it was when they started. If the Secretary of State pursues the same negative approach to transport, I can envisage only his removal from the job. It seems that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster intends to review the record of each Secretary of State to decide whether he or she is up to the job and should remain in it. If that is the position, and bearing in mind the Secretary of State's speech this afternoon, the right hon. Gentleman does not have much chance of passing the test of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, which is whether he is able to run his Department competently.

I think that the right hon. Gentleman is the eighth Secretary of State for Transport to appear at the Government Dispatch Box over the past 13 or 14 years. I had some doubt whether the Secretary of State would continue to have a Department when Brian Redwood said during the "Today" programme—[HON. MEMBERS: "Brian Redhead".] The same fools are back after the election.

Brian Redhead said that he wondered whether the Department of Transport would be an independent Department. When the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster came into the Chamber, apparently to debate the paving Bill that will lead to the privatisation of British Rail, perhaps that was a sign that what Brian Redhead was talking about was taking place. I see the Secretary of State for the Environment sitting next to the Secretary of State for Transport——

Mr. MacGregor: What?

Mr. Prescott: The President of the Board of Trade. We must keep up with these new titles. I think that President of the Board of Trade is the title that he had when he welcomed me as a maiden Speaker in 1970, when I came to the House. The office continues, but the reality is that the right hon. Gentleman still has his eyes on many of the things that involve the Department of Transport, as he did when he was Secretary of State for the Environment. We have learnt that he is very much involved with the problems that are associated with Canary Wharf. He is promising to transfer the civil servants of the Department of Transport to Canary Wharf to save it from further bankruptcy.

We shall wait to see whether the Government are prepared to help. Of course, it could not be called a subsidy to Olympia and York. It is just a matter of moving thousands of civil servants down the line—although there is now doubt whether the Jubilee line will be completed, the way that the Government are performing—of the docklands light railway. That line cannot take its current passenger load, let alone thousands more passengers sent to Canary Wharf as the cavalry for the Olympia and York company.

Although I want to talk about transport, the Secretary of State made it clear that the Bill also deals with privatisation of the coal industry, and my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) will deal with that when he replies to the debate. However, as I said in the debate on the Queen's Speech, there is a connection between the fortunes of the coal and rail industries. Some 80 per cent. of the freight income of British Rail is dependent on the movement of coal. The change in energy policy from British coal to imported coal and from coal to gas will have consequences for the movement of coal and therefore for the profitability of BR's freight sector.

The Secretary of State made it clear that any privatisation proposal requires just one element—the one element in which people purchasing public assets are interested—and that is profit. If an industry does not make a profit, no one will want to buy it. Indeed, it is required to make a profit for a number of years before it can be floated on the stock exchange. It is difficult with British Rail to judge whether it can make a profit over the number of years required before it can be floated as a privatised company. That will not be easy in the coal industry either.

The right hon. Gentleman, perhaps inadvertently, disclosed that the Bill is not an attempt to secure money —or the Government getting their grubby hands on the money, as I suggested last week. That is true for both British Rail and British Coal, because looking at their assets makes me wonder who would want to purchase them. Of course, the whole future profitability of British Coal is dependent on what contracts are agreed with National Power. That is a strategic decision, to which no doubt the President of the Board of Trade is currently directing his mind. We shall have to wait to know the final

outcome. All that emphasises the interdependence of the rail and coal industries, which are dealt with together in the Bill.

Mr. Dalyell: Before we leave grubby hands and inadvertence, perhaps we could return to a question that I asked the Secretary of State, to which he did not reply, about exactly what is happening at Edinburgh Waverley station. It is a most valuable piece of land in the centre of the city and huge amounts of money are involved, yet the right hon. Gentleman says that he knows nothing about the matter. The Scots are entitled to a statement from the Minister of Energy, when he replies to the debate, on what the Government do and do not know about the reports of what is happening in the centre of Edinburgh.

Mr. Prescott: My hon. Friend has made his point. Perhaps the Secretary of State would like to intervene now and deny that he knows anything about the matter. There is one important difference between making available for sale the assets of stations and those of services—a great deal of taxpayers' money has been poured into stations and they are very profitable assets. Indeed, many questions flow from that proposal. As the chairman of British Rail, who was appointed by the previous Secretary of State, has asked, how will the proposal fit into the total accountability of the British Rail system?

We want to raise the whole matter of privatisation. The Secretary of State made it clear that we are discussing a paving Bill which does not actually privatise, but which takes important steps towards achieving that. Presumably, the Bill flows from the previous Secretary of State's speech to the Tory party conference, when he appealed to the chairman of British Rail to allow private resources to play an active part. The chairman said that the law would have to be changed to achieve that. Presumably, he was right, and that is the purpose of the Bill. It is the early stages of privatisation.

The Bill is part of the Government's ideological obsession with privatisation. The argument is not simply one of public ownership versus privatisation. Many changes are taking place in our great industries, whether they are publicly or privately owned, and account must be taken of their requirements.

During Question Time, the Secretary of State for Transport referred to bus deregulation. There may be more services on selected routes. One can find a good example of that in Sheffield, where hundreds of buses run at peak times on the profitable routes, but not early in the morning, late at night, or on Sundays. One cannot obtain a timetable, because none of the operators keeps to one. Buses are older, fares are higher and there are fewer passengers with fewer overall services.

I hope that the Secretary of State will send for some of the impartial evidence that is available in abundance, to prove to himself what has happened. He does not need to ask us; he should ask the professional operators. I was surprised to hear the Minister for Public Transport say earlier some of the things that he did about bus privatisation. There is overwhelming evidence that it has been bad for a transport industry that depends on combining profitable and non-profitable services that run at profitable and non-profitable times. There will always be operators willing to run profitable routes.

If the Secretary of State reviews the privatisation of the railways in the 1930s, he will find that a number of operators wanted to run services at peak times, but not early in the morning or late at night—in the way that a modern railway system must. They wanted to run services only at profitable times. If the Secretary of State wants further evidence, he has only to listen to Virgin Atlantic airways, which wants to run non-stop services only on profitable routes at certain times. The logic of Virgin's case is that it must maximise its profits for the benefit of its shareholders or investors. British Rail cannot provide a national service on that basis, which is why most countries have rejected the privatisation route and maintain a public network system.

Mr. Adley: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will absolve me of the charge of being obsessed with dogma in respect of bus deregulation. Nevertheless, has the hon. Gentleman considered the success enjoyed by London Transport's contracting-out system? One example is the 24 bus that goes past the House, and which I use regularly. Is there not a case for trying to marry the entrepreneurial and managerial skills of the private sector within the framework of a service provision that incorporates a serious social element?

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point, particularly in respect of a bus route that is operating in an area that is not deregulated, and of a private, entrepreneurial operator that opposed deregulation and thought that it would be disastrous for the bus industry. I am not against some combination of public and private operations within the public sector, but it must be within a regulated framework for which someone is held responsible. British Rail has been pursuing certain joint private and public operations. That approach is not unique to the bus industry. It means that one operator remains in control, to ensure that safety standards and the quality of the investment are met. That is as important for public transport systems in Europe as it is here.

The Government's argument represents something of a vendetta against a public rail system. I suppose that I can welcome the fact that the Bill is just a paving measure. A number of Secretaries of State for Transport have, with various degrees of flourish, presented the House with different ideas. One was for a totally privatised British Rail. Another was for a separate track authority. Then we heard about sectorisation to allow competition, and the Prime Minister's solution, with its romanticising of regional railways—of chocolate and cream, and of brief encounters in the waiting room. Incidentally, the regional companies never made a profit, and so never invested in the tracks. The state intervened because those companies were collapsing. Intervention was necessary to ensure track investment and safety. The history is clear for all to see.

The previous Secretary of State for Transport planned to sell off the profitable bits—but then he ran into the Prime Minister, and now we have a new Secretary of State. I am not too sure what he stands for.

Mr. Rogers: Cannot the same argument be made in respect of the private coal industry, which became so corrupt and was so lacking in investment that in 1919, the Sankey commission recommended that the industry should be taken into public ownership, so that it could be viably maintained? The coal industry was nationalised not

[Mr. Rogers]

as a consequence of socialist dogma but because it was not being properly managed in private hands, and had been run into the ground.

Mr. Prescott: There is much in what my hon. Friend says. Indeed, the argument could be extended to cover the gas and electricity industries. When large amounts of public investment were needed, beyond the means of the organisations running such industries—whether those organisations were private bodies or local authorities—the state stepped in and brought them together, reorganising them to meet the requirements of, for instance, the national grid systems. Admittedly, Tory Governments were involved, but I think that they improved the arrangements.

This paving Bill, according to the Secretary of State, gives British Rail powers to take the first faltering steps towards privatisation. The argument appears to be that British Rail has not been able to begin to involve private capital or private enterpreneurs, but there are many examples to the contrary. Even under the existing legislation, 40 per cent. of wagon fleets are privately run; there are private locomotives and a private freight service. It is interesting to note that the private freight service Tiger Rail, which ran from Cornwall to Scotland, collapsed. Who had to step in and take it over? Of course, good old British Rail.

There must always be an authority to ensure that such services continue, because they handle important passenger and freight movements on which the country depends. They have a crucial—indeed, a strategic—role. Similarly, in the case of private catering services, maintenance and property development, many arrangements have come about between British Rail and the public and private sectors. I have no ideological objections to that or, indeed, to the use of private money.

We have heard a great deal about Stage Coach and about the possibility of Virgin's coming in to run certain lines. In many instances, the aim—according to the Government—is to develop a privatised culture and entrepreneurial abilities. I am not necessarily against that, either. A Labour Government introduced a private airline at Gatwick to compete with the state airline; as a result, breakfast was provided on services to Scotland. I am not opposed to an element of competition. That private airline, which was introduced to open up Gatwick, went from success to success, and so did the airport within a regulated public system.

British Rail has in the last few years been run like a privatised company. It has been split into sectors and competition between those sectors has been encouraged. A rate of return has been imposed: InterCity, for instance, has a rate of return that makes it the only passenger-profitable railway system. I might add that a bit of fiddling and creative accountancy has been employed to achieve those figures, as I am sure the Secretary of State knows. The train service to Gatwick may be an instance of that; it does not immediately come to mind as a normal InterCity service.

In connection with the use of private capital, let me tell the Secretary of State—who referred to Treasury rules—that most European railways borrow privately from the market. That applies to investment in, for example, nuclear power as well as transport investment. When we ask why our public industries cannot have the same access to the private market, we are told that it is cheaper to borrow from the Treasury. That is true: I remember the chairman of British Rail telling me that the Treasury was the best bank in town, and I am sure it is. The trouble is that there are not many resources there, and borrowers who are desperately short of money to invest may have to look elsewhere.

If that can be done in Europe, I do not see why it cannot be done here as well. It is not enough to say, "We do such things differently here." European countries have achieved a scale of investment that has enabled their railways to become much more modern and effective.

The Treasury's rules have not always been consistent, as the Secretary of State must know. On aspect has been consistent, however: the rules have been the same for Labour Governments as for Tory Governments. I am not suggesting that the Tories are implementing their policies differently from us, but I think that the arrangements were as crazy then as they are now. Why was British Airways, as a public company, able to lease aircraft, while British Rail could not lease trains? I am not making an ideological point; the same Treasury is involved. When we asked the Treasury to explain that arrangement, we were told, "If British Airways goes bust, aeroplanes can be sold; trains cannot be sold." In reality, of course, neither company would be allowed to go bust.

French railways borrow billions. They have launched bonds on our own market and have raised British capital to finance TGV railway systems. Their Treasury does not guarantee any losses. However, their financial bodies recognise that they will not be allowed to go to the wall, despite the fact that there is no Treasury guarantee. On that basis, borrowing rates are very good. That is precisely how the French, Italians and Germans use private capital. There is no reason why we should not do the same. British Rail is allowed by law to borrow money privately, but the Treasury does not allow it to do so.

A judgment always has to be made about British Rail's borrowing and expenditure requirements. Any Government, of whatever political complexion, would be involved. One limit that has been placed upon investment is the external financing limit. The EFL was introduced first under a Labour Government. I criticise that limit, but I do not deny any Chancellor of the Exchequer the right to limit expenditure requirements.

The Chancellor has referred to a sum of £3,600 million. I did not know what it was. Today I have learnt that it is the difference between the level of subsidy provided in the early 1980s and now, and that that is the amount of public money that British Rail has lost. There was no commitment whatsoever in any document to which the Chancellor could refer that we should provide that level of subsidy. I notice that the previous Secretary of State set a target for reduction of subsidy in the south-east to nothing by 1992. That policy, however, has had to be reversed. The subsidy having been reduced from about £1 billion a year to round about £400 million a year, it is now creeping back up to about £800 million or £900 million a year.

The Government have had to face the fact that all the money cannot be raised from passenger fares. British Rail's subsidy for investment and for running the railways has been steadily reduced. Therefore, it has cut corners on maintenance and safety. If the Secretary of State doubts that, he ought to study British Rail's safety reports. British Rail tried to make up for its loss of income by sacking

6,000 or 7,000 personnel, which resulted in those employees who remained having to work very long hours that left them exhausted.

According to the inquiry, the electrician at Clapham who made that fatal mistake had worked for months on end without a day off because, manpower requirements having been cut, fewer personnel were left to do the work. A direct connection can be made between British Rail having to cut staff and safety levels. The Secretary of State ought to study the report on the Bellgrove tragedy in Scotland. British Rail tried to save money by cutting the line track and the junction points. That is now agreed to have been a disaster. A number of Secretaries of State told me that that was acknowledged by the railway inspectorate. Unfortunately, however, the railways inspectorate is completely subordinate to the Secretary of State's financial requirements. The price that we have paid is a reduction in safety and quality of service. Our railway system is inadequately funded. It receives only 20 per cent. of what is provided in some other countries. That will have consequences for fares, quality of service and investment.

I had some sympathy for the Secretary of State's point, that we spend less on subsidy than many continental railways. I do not suggest that our railway system ought to be subsidised at the same level as the German railway system. The efficiency of our system is better than that of most continental systems. That did not come about only under Tory Governments. If one refers to the Leeds university study in 1979, one finds that exactly the same arguments were used in the 1970s. They have now been reproduced in the *Economist* intelligence reports on the efficiency of our railway system. Our public sector railway system, therefore, has always been more efficient than most of its counterparts on the continent. Efficiency and productivity did not, therefore, come about as a result of manpower cuts. Others may have increased productivity, but our railway system has always been much more efficient than its continental counterparts.

Nevertheless, the amount of public support for our railway system is inadequate. A good-quality system cannot be run with the amount of money that has been given to British Rail. That is the challenge for the Secretary of State. He must go to the Treasury and argue for more money. Why is it so difficult to get money for British Rail when billions can be provided for the road infrastructure? Secretaries of State have told the House that they have been given £5 billion or £6 billion for roads, but they have told us a different story about rail: they were cutting back on one side and giving it to the other.

I accept the Secretary of State's argument that a 1 per cent. growth in road transport is a small amount, compared with the overall growth in road traffic. However, that 1 per cent. represents hundreds of thousands of lorry movements, which will be relevant in the south-east if it does not have a decent rail network to Europe. Even if the capacity of roads in the south-east were doubled, they would not be able to take that traffic. The Secretary of State will experience such problems in integrating the road and rail system.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman is at it again. He is implying that, despite the record investment in British Rail, a lot more needs to be spent because, he says, of underfunding. During the election campaign, the official Labour party made it clear that it had no additional spending commitments over and above our public expenditure plans, except for child benefit and pensions. Does the hon. Gentleman have the approval of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) for a large further increase in British Rail investment? It seemed clear during the election that he had not.

Mr. Prescott: We have had arguments for some time about who has put the most investment into transport, but there is no escaping the fact that more money must be found if we are to have a modern rail system. In my speech in July, I suggested that we take the ideology and the warring between the parties out of this debate. Let us recognise that inadequate investment has been made in the rail system. The Library produced a report on Friday showing that similar levels of investment had been made between the 1970s and 1980s. But it was insufficient. The difference between 1980 and 1990 is that the stock is 10 years older—nearly 30 years old—and needs to be improved. Network SouthEast is a good example of that.

How much investment is necessary? Presumably the Secretary of State accepts that we shall need a fast rail link to Europe, even if it runs only between King's Cross and the tunnel. That will cost £3 billion or £4 billion. Investment is needed for the Paddington to Heathrow link. Also, will the right hon. Gentleman make a statement about the Jubilee line?

I am trying to deal with the point that Governments of both parties have not made sufficient investment in our rail system. The Secretary of State for Transport—whoever he is and of whatever political party—will have to argue for more resources. We have considered the example of Europe and asked why BR cannot borrow from the private sector, as it has previously. Many European railway systems do so, and it is not good enough for the Secretary of State to say that our practices are different.

Our definition of the public sector borrowing requirement is different from Europe's, for a number of reasons. That may be changed under the Maastricht agreement as regards definition of public accounts but the framework in which British Rail must operate is a crucial factor in this argument. It is not right that only private companies can borrow private money; most other railway systems are able to attract it. We argue that that is the way to proceed.

A cause of concern is the way in which the Government have sold many of our assets at knockdown prices. The hotel sector is a classic example. Nineteen hotels were sold for £48 million. They are now worth hundreds of millions of pounds. One of the group's luxury hotels is now worth more than the total sale price. The Treasury would not allow it to borrow privately in order to make the investment necessary or to raise mortgages to bring them up to a good standard. The Treasury has often undermined the public sector by requiring high returns. As a result, the Treasury has had to wipe off the considerable debts of the mining and railway industries.

Sealink, which owned many ports, was bought for £67 million and its shipping fleets were sold for only £260 million. The Government should have utilised those public sector assets instead of running them down and failing to invest in them. The Treasury rules requiring an 8 per cent. return on investment—no such requirement is placed on the private sector—have seriously undermined the public sector. We have not given the public sector a chance. We have tied its hands, undermined it and enforced poorer

[Mr. Prescott]

quality. The Treasury has always imposed a kind of energy tax on the gas and electricity industries, forcing them to charge more through a negative external financial limit. All Governments have been at it, so to that extent it behoves all who want effective public ownership to show that the Treasury rules have been unfair. Report after report in the House has made that clear.

I have an interesting report, "Financing for Public Transport", which makes it clear that different forms of financing and planning are needed for our railways. It makes the point that I have been making. The report was produced by the Bow Group, which I understand is very much concerned with Tory party thinking. It has considered the transport systems of Europe. The Secretary of State should read the report, go to Europe and look at what it does, because perhaps we can learn some lessons.

But what about the Government experience with private capital? What is the Secretary of State going to say about Olympia and York? We have heard nothing from him so far. The Government argue that private capital must be involved in large transport works, yet the Heathrow to Paddington link is collapsing because BR cannot get its 20 per cent. with the private investment that is required. Olympia and York appears to be bankrupt and cannot raise money. The Government agreed to Olympia and York being involved on the Jubilee line project—which was not revealed as a priority for London in Government studies—simply because it promised that it might be able to get £400 million. We now hear that it did not enter into any agreement to that effect and that no down payments are likely to be forthcoming. The Government's insistence on private sector terms has damaged the public sector.

Under section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, public money cannot be involved in the channel tunnel rail link. There is no way that the link will be built without public money. Channel tunnel finance was based on a contract agreement between the two state railways in France and Britain. Bankers lent the money because it was underwritten through the public contract. The Treasury did not argue that the public sector liability for the channel tunnel should be put on the public sector borrowing requirement. The Treasury has always been rather flexible in its interpretation of public and private deals.

I appeal to the new Secretary of State to consider the new measures that have been adopted in Europe and see how effective they have been instead of talking simply about bringing Stagecoach in to run the trains. I noticed that the Minister for Public Transport went on the night train to Edinburgh, saying "Isn't it marvellous that the private sector is doing this? British Rail had no money to continue the service." He stayed on board until two o'clock, while the press were there, and then shot off to his public sector sleeping wagon. He slept the rest of the journey and got up and said, "I am 50 and somewhat old." God knows what he will do when he gets on the Virgin train. I do not know whether there will be sleepers on that train, but clearly this is a case of cherry picking—simply taking profitable lines.

I am not against the abilities of private sector entrepreneurs being put against public sector management, but public sector management should be given the resources to do the job. Why should Mr. Branson be able to lease trains when the public sector, using the same track, cannot raise capital in the same way? There is no such difference on the continent. The proposed Virgin train is being treated differently from the public sector for ideological reasons. That is our main complaint.

We have made it clear that we believe that British Rail should be in public ownership. Its record compared with other public operators has been good, but it needs a 10-year plan for investment. The railways cannot be run according to a three-year plan, which the Secretary of State has told us he will introduce. Different forms of financing, such as leasing or public bonds, are necessary. I give him a radical idea if he wants one: why does not he change British Rail's accounts to show a debt-equity relationship—as the European commission has been advocating—and allow British Rail to borrow privately, with equity held by the Government? There is no reason why he could not do that if he wants access to the money.

We need tough standards and quality controls, not the passengers charter nonsense that has been introduced of late, which most people regard as totally irrelevant to their requirements. As has been said, people using the misery Southend line want investment, not a passengers charter. They want a powerful consumer group with the powers of a monopolies commission to investigate and use sanctions against British Rail so that we give the consumer real power against the publicly owned railway system. There is a great need for that, which we advocated years ago, before there was an argument about a passengers charter.

Finally and most important, I deal with the environment and congestion which are now essential elements of any transport policy. We must encourage people to switch from their private vehicles to the public transport system. We cannot build our way out of our congestion problems. The environmental damage is so great that it would be disastrous for us to continue on the Department's projections, of a 140 per cent., increase in cars in 25 years. The railways offer a wonderful opportunity. They can make a major contribution to improving the quality of our lives and to helping with the environmental damage that results from the present mix of our transport system and the massive congestion costs which have the same cause.

A change is as essential for freight as it is for passengers. We are on the periphery of the Common Market, and unless we have the fast, through connections for freight and for passengers we shall remain on the periphery of economic development in Europe. The connections are expensive and we must find other ways of raising the necessary moneys. As I said in the July debate, we have no ideological opposition to the use of private capital within a public ownership framework. We think that it is necessary. It is the Government who are ideologically obsessed and who wish to introduce legislation to pursue a privatised railway system. That is the reality. The cost will be too great for this country. Transport will continue to decline. We offer a real alternative, one which is being pursued to great effect in Europe but which this country is denied for merely ideological reasons.

4.51 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on the Bill. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, who opened the debate, will know

perfectly well that I have what some would describe as an obsession with the railways. I do not, I hope, have an ideological obsession either for or against their privatisation.

I have no hesitation in acknowledging that many of the privatisation measures that the Government have introduced have been of substantial benefit to the industries involved, the employees in those industries and the consumer. However, the first question that one must ask is why it has taken 13 years of Conservative government to introduce this paving Bill. The answer is simple. In spite of many fanatical Secretaries of State keen on the principle of privatisation, none has as yet been able to persuade his officials or the Government of the day that there is any practical solution to the need to inject private capital into our railways without affecting the social obligations which many of us believe are an essential component of the railway system.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, who is talking to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, answered my question last Thursday. I asked whether he was able to tell me whether in parliamentary history a Government had introduced a paving Bill for an industry prior to the preparation and presentation of a White Paper on that industry. My right hon. Friend was honest and said that he could not but that there has to be a first time for everything. My concern is that I do not want there to be a first time for this Government—or for any Government—to decimate our railway system and then to look back and say, "What a shame, we got it wrong."

I must declare a possible future commercial interest —I keep saying that, but nothing ever happens—but, having said that, no one who is intimate with the management of British Rail, especially with that of some of its subsidiary companies, could possibly be under any illusion that there was not substantial scope for improvement in the management of some of the national assets under its charge. On that basis alone, it is foolish for anyone who seriously has the good will of the railways at heart to say that absolutely nothing could be done to the structure or ownership of any of British Rail's assets to improve them. I do not believe that to be the case.

When my right hon. Friend replies to this debate, I hope that he will answer one simple question. If he refers to the Queen's Speech, he will see that it contains two sentences dealing with the railways:

> "My Government are committed to increasing the role of the railways in meeting the country's transport needs. Legislation will be introduced to enable the private sector to operate rail services."

Should the plan in the second sentence not come about, would the Government's commitment to the first still be intact? Perhaps when my right hon. Friend's civil servants have had a chance to work out what I mean by that question, he can answer at the end of the debate.

This proposal is the biggest change for our railways since the Beeching report of ill repute. The Government of that time thought that they could make changes to modernise the railways, to make them more efficient and to provide a better service for the customer. Many people were, sadly, disillusioned by what happened and, indeed, very few people at that time listened to those who understand the complexity of running a railway.

I intervened on my right hon. Friend at Question Time today and listened to him just now repeating the hoary old statistic about 93 per cent. of the country's commercial traffic going by road. Will he confirm that that includes the postman, the dustman and the milkman, to name but three? As far as I know, no one is proposing to build railways into every house and home in the land. May I say to him in his new post; beware civil servants bearing statistics, because very often the statistics produced by the Department of Roads—I mean, the Department of Transport—are prepared to prove a case to him.

May I try to take my right hon. Friend with me? Does he agree with the proposition that we all know where we are at the moment with the ownership and operation of our railways, that we know where we want to get to but have no idea how to arrive there, so we are introducing a paving Bill and shall introduce a White Paper later this year, discuss its contents and then introduce legislation? Would that be a fair or an unfair assessment of the situation?

My right hon. Friend again used the word "franchise" this afternoon. I wonder how many of us know what is meant by "franchising" in terms of the future of the railway. Many hon. Friends and members of the Opposition will know that for many years I have been involved in a major hotel group, probably one of the main franchised organisations in the world. Any proposition purporting to suggest that railway franchising can be undertaken on the same basis as that carried out by, say, Holiday Inn or McDonald's is unlikely to be taken seriously. We are entering uncharted territory. It is as well to put these issues on record—that is not to say that solutions cannot be found, but we are entering uncharted territory.

As my right hon. Friend said, our manifesto had three main aims. He mentioned a fourth and a fifth, but the three main ones were to franchise passenger services, to sell the freight business and to liberalise access to the network. May I put a simple thought in my right hon. Friend's mind? There is a potential conflict between selling the freight business and thereafter liberalising access to the networks. Does that mean selling a part of the business to a company but saying that it will nevertheless be open to competition in the future? By selling the freight business, do we mean to create a national freight monopoly as the Japanese have done, or do we mean something different? There is an enormous number of questions to be asked.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport touched on the possibility of certain private sector operators coming into the business. We often hear about Virgin Airways. I sometimes find it hard to agree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), but I am forced to agree with him on occasions. He raised the point, which I raised in debate last week and which I make again to my right hon. Friend, that it would be unacceptable for us to create conditions in which the private sector had access to funds, and conditions of financing and operation which were not available to British Rail. That would be a foolish thing to do.

It is no wonder that Mr. Branson is reputedly interested —I do not know whether he is interested, because, despite three attempts to contact him, I have never had a reply —in the east coast main line and in the London to Edinburgh services——

Mr. Prescott: London to Aberdeen.

Mr. Adley: The hon. Gentleman says that it is London to Aberdeen. I thought that it was London to Edinburgh. It is probably part of Mr. Branson's continuing vendetta with Lord King, who runs the airline services on that route.

There has been £500 million of public sector investment in the east coast main line. Is it really in the national interest for us to allow cherry pickers to pick off the bits that they think that they would like? There may be a case for the regulator, or whoever will make such decisions, to say to the operators: "Yes, you pick the services that you want to quote for and we will give you one as well. If you want bits of the east coast main line, you can have the Dartford loop line too." We could then see the measure of their commitment to public services.

I will not repeat the points made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. My right hon. Friend's predecessor as Secretary of State claimed, with every justification, that our European competitors and others are rushing here for lessons on how we run our railways. It is perfectly true that the train kilometres per member of staff employed on British Rail reflect favourably when compared with the figures for SNCF or Deutsche Bundesbahn. That is a comment on the quality of management of British Rail rather than on what may be done in the future.

It would be unwise for the debate to proceed without putting on record the fact that some of the other countries that have considered railway privatisation have wholly rejected it. The Japanese are frequently mentioned. I took the trouble of talking to them. They told me that I was the first British Member of Parliament who had ever bothered so to do. I drew up with them an agreement so that I was clear that I understood what they had done. I have that agreement here, but I will not weary the House by quoting from it. The Japanese have not privatised their railways; they have restructured them, and they have created six regional public sector passenger monopolies and one public sector freight monopoly.

In Germany, Helmut Kohl set up a Government railway commission two years ago to study the relationship between the German state and the railways. After 18 months, the Germans have rejected privatisation. Helmut Kohl is not a raving socialist. He was looking for a solution to the problems of the cost of the German railways to the German taxpayer. He did not find the solution in privatisation.

Sweden has been mentioned. Sweden has set up a corporate railway, but all the shares are held by the state and there is no intention of trying to sell off those shares. SNCF, as we know, is the pride of France. As I pointed out in Question Time to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, even the Americans—the United States is the home of capitalism—had allowed their private sector passenger railways to fall into such a state of total disrepair and awfulness that the passenger railways have been virtually nationalised by the creation of Amtrak.

There must be lessons here for us. My plea to my right hon. Friend is not to judge what he intends to do by the privatisations that we have effected in other industries. He should look at and learn from the experience of other countries whose state-owned railways also cost them a great deal of money and which have also had the benefit of studying the position, but have come to their conclusions after, and not before, they have considered the pros and cons, and the possibilities of what we are about to do. I will not discuss the Stagecoach experiment or the experience of my hon. Friend the Minister of State. However, they show that opportunities exist within the present framework and that ownership of railways is not the real nub of the problem.

I issue a friendly warning to my right hon. Friend. Many of our constituents use the railways. British Rail carries 2 million passengers daily. Some 458,000 of them come into and out of central London between 7 am and 10 am. Unlike the gas, water or electricity industries, which are turned on and off by the twist of a tap or switch, the railways are a "people" industry. People catch their train from their station and they talk to the staff. We must be very careful that we do not do anything that causes serious disillusionment among the public if our proposals fail to continue to provide them with at least the minimum level of service to which they have been used.

The Bill is a paving Bill and we have a long way to go. By way of reference to reality as opposed to theory, I will ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State one or two questions. I presume that he will start with what I call the "easy" bits of privatisation—the retail side of the relationship between the railway and the passenger, such as car parking, catering, on-board staff and the termini. No one doubts that there could be improvements there or that there may be a role for private sector finance and private sector management.

We then come to the far more difficult part of the task —what one might call the "production" side of the railway, such as drivers and the maintenance of rolling stock. I speak now to my right hon. Friend advisedly and after personal contact. He should not assume that all trade unionists in the railway unions are wholly opposed to everything that the Government propose. He should not assume their hostility. He should recognise that some of them are open to discussion. Will my right hon. Friend —I do not expect an answer now—consider at an early date having meetings with some of the trade union leaders, not necessarily those of the previous generation, but those of the next generation who have been directly elected by secret ballot among their members? He might then be favourably disposed to realise that some of them are interested in only one thing—a good railway and making a good railway better.

We have an awful lot of questions to ask. We must consider British Transport police. Who will pick up the bill for the £82·8 million that British Rail had to spend on its police force last year? Who will pay for the enormous heritage costs with which British Rail is involved? Is my right hon. Friend aware that last year alone £7 million had to be set aside by British Rail for safeguarding the structure of the St. Pancras station hotel? That is just one building, and there are hundreds that need to be funded.

My message to my colleagues is this: let us not concentrate only on the political aspects of railway ownership and railway activity. My right hon. Friend was courteous enough to say that he recognised that his Department must examine the investment criteria for road and for rail. I should have liked him to be a little more positive. I should have liked him to say that in his new job he intends to start again with a blank sheet of paper. I should be grateful if he would consider casting aside all the things that he has been told about the criteria and methods used by his Department and start again in the light of the social requirements of the railway as we approach the 21st century.

The docklands have been mentioned. Some £400 million is anticipated from Olympia and York before the Jubilee line can get the go-ahead, yet £250 million of taxpayers' money was put into 1·5 miles of the Limehouse link road. That was automatically coughed up by the taxpayer and no questions were asked. That is the sort of double standard that many of us hope that my right hon. Friend will re-examine as part of his remit as Secretary of State for Transport.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was generous to me before the election in giving me plenty of time to put forward to him privately some of the views that I put to the House now. He asked me at one stage why I was so keen to defend a nationalised industry. I said that I was not keen to defend a nationalised industry but that I was keen to defend the railway, which I believe to be the last means of civilised travel known to man.

We have much to lose. There is much at risk: a national timetable, through ticketing, interchangeable tickets, national products such as travelcards, senior citizens' concessions and facilities for disabled travellers. Many people, including pensioners, anxiously await answers to questions concerning those services.

I have described railway privatisation as a potential poll tax on wheels. I am glad to see that the words "railway privatisation" are not included in the Queen's Speech. I take that to mean that there has been a reduction in dogma but that the Government maintain a determination to try to improve the railway service. I accept that that is the intention of my right hon. Friend and his colleagues and, for that reason, I have no intention of voting against the Bill; but, before I can be persuaded to vote in favour of a Bill that may be presented to the House later this year, I shall need to be convinced that my judgment of my right hon. Friend's intentions towards the future of our railways is backed by the words of the legislation that they produce.

5.10 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): As one who is sponsored by the Transport Salaried Staffs Association, I always enjoy hearing what the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) has to say about the railway industry. I apologise to him if I do not follow his arguments today. I shall touch briefly on one aspect of the railway industry but I have been prompted to take part in the debate principally because I am concerned about the implications of the form of the Bill for the House of Commons.

I have always had a high regard for the Secretary of State in his various offices and thought that he was a good Leader of the House. That is why I find it sad that, as the ex-champion of Back Benchers' rights, he has come to the House today with a Bill that is a constitutional obscenity. I am deeply sorry that he comes here today as the ex-gamekeeper—the ex-leader who has become leader of the poachers.

As I shall show, the Bill is utterly in keeping with the arrogance and contempt that the ex-Prime Minister always showed to the House. The Secretary of State referred to the Bill as a "standard form" Bill. That is how democracy and the rights of the House are eroded. It is standard form, is it? I remind the right hon. Gentleman that this so-called standard form was introduced in 1988 when the former Prime Minister, with typical disregard for the House, wanted to drive through her measures relating to the electricity and water industries.

The Bill represents another step in the erosion of the powers of the House. I ask hon. Members—particularly new Conservative Members, who, I understand, are full of excitement at being here and full of conviction that their party must be right, to look at the form of the Bill. I ask them what they would say had a Labour Minister introduced a Bill containing powers anything like as obscure or general as the powers contained in the present Bill.

Clause 1 states:

"Where the Secretary of State is at any time proposing that any functions, property, rights or liabilities . . . should be transferred . . . the functions of the relevant corporation shall include the power to do anything . . . appropriate for . . . facilitating the implementation of the proposal."

Then comes the provision which I think should be unacceptable to the House, and above all to the Secretary of State. Clause 1(5) provides that "the powers"—that is, the powers now given to those industries——

"shall be exercisable whether or not Parliament has given any approval on which the implementation of the proposal depends".

Only in one other piece of legislation have I ever seen anything so constitutionally absurd and so potentially dangerous in the breadth of its implications.

I have expressed my regard for the Secretary of State as an individual and I have no doubt that he has included those words honourably because he knows what he intends to do. Unfortunately, however, we have recently had something of a rush hour at the Department of Transport: one might almost say that we need a signal box system to usher Secretaries of States in and out of the Department. We have had seven of them—and a Prime Minister who likes playing trains, too. Yet the Bill contains a general power to do anything: it is a "Freedom for the Minister to do what he likes Bill". It is a Bill giving him an absolute power, introduced in the absence of a White Paper against which we can judge his future actions, in the absence of a Bill against which we or the courts can decide on his future actions and in the absence of any firm indication from him of precisely how he, as the latest transient incumbent of his office, would envisage using that power.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is not the position even worse than that? Does not the Bill also say that anyone designated by the Secretary of State should be able to act on his behalf in the same extraordinarily wide-ranging way?

Mr. Williams: Yes, and it is a constitutional monstrosity. There is a joke about getting one's reprisal in first; the Bill is about getting one's retrospective legislation in first by giving oneself the power to do that which may be deemed necessary at some time in the future but of which the House cannot be told at present.

The Minister said that the use of the powers would impose small costs, with the interesting qualification that those costs would be small in relation to the total public expenditure involved in the industries. In fact, it will be a substantial sum, and we have precedent to demonstrate it. In the case of the denationalisation of the water industry, the cost came to £39 million. That may be small in relation to the total expenditure of the industry, but none the less it has to be borne by the industry's customers. In terms of parliamentary accountability, it is a cost that Ministers refuse to recognise.

[Mr. Williams]

I am a member of the Public Accounts Committee, and I refer the House to its minutes. A short time ago, we interviewed Sir Terence Heiser, permanent secretary at the Department of the Environment, who has now retired. Asked by the present Chairman of Ways and Means—not a Labour Member—

"Why do you exclude the £21·4 million national awareness campaign and indeed the £17·9 million regional campaign, both of which, it is stated, were a necessary forward activity for a successful flotation?",

Sir Terence Heiser said,

"the industry had already decided beforehand on the marketing, the awareness campaign."

Why was it excluded? Because under the standard form clause—as it has become at its second usage—the Minister had given in advance powers for the industry to undertake spending that it thought were necessary to implement his policies. But when it comes to accounting to the House for the cost of implementing his policies, the Minister refuses to accept that those costs were attributable to privatisation because they were costs incurred under the enabling Bill. Accountability is virtually all that Parliament has to enable it to exercise control over the Executive, and the Bill represents yet another minor nail in the coffin of accountability.

Mr. MacGregor: Naturally, I was concerned to hear the right hon. Gentleman's misgivings about the Bill. He was right to say that, as Leader of the House, I was jealous of safeguarding the powers and position of the House. However, the right hon. Gentleman misunderstands his main point, particularly in relation to clause 1(5). None of the proposals for privatisation could go ahead until we have introduced the main Bills and had them approved by the House. There is no question of our trying through this small Bill to assume in advance what will happen to the major Bills.

The Bill simply enables British Rail and British Coal to incur expenditure and consult outside advisers so that the Government can engage in discussions with those industries about the proposals and some of the questions that will be raised in relation to the proposals as the main legislation makes progress through the House. British Rail and British Coal do not have powers at the moment to engage outside advisers for some of the purposes that we shall want so that Parliament can be better informed by the time that we consider the main legislation. If the right hon. Gentleman wants to raise any other points, I shall be happy to consider them. However, there is no endeavour in the Bill to pre-empt debates in the House about the main proposals.

Mr. Williams: The Secretary of State has proved my case. He sincerely believes what he has just said. I do not doubt his honour or ability in this matter for a second. However, the Government refused to recognise that £39 million was spent prior to the privatisation of the water industry under a power which is also contained in clause 1. Clause 1(1) states that the corporation

"shall include the power to do anything . . . appropriate for the purpose of—

(a) facilitating the implementation of the proposal;"

The tab for the £39 million, which was spent on an awareness campaign, was picked up by the customers of the water industry as a result of a power equivalent to that in clause 1(1). The Secretary of State is facilitating a similar power today. I accept that he is also facilitating the freedom to take part in discussions, but the industries do not need legislation to do that.

I was a Minister in the Ministry of Technology when it was responsible for coal, power and gas. We had wide-ranging and regular talks with the industries. We do not need an Act to allow an industry to talk to its Minister about its activities. The Bill authorises what would otherwise be illegitimate expenditure of that industry's money in facilitating a political privatisation.

Mr. William O'Brien: I served on the Standing Committee on the paving Bill in relation to the water industry. My right hon. Friend is right: provisions were made in that paving Bill to allow a charging structure—namely, compulsory water metering trials—in a water authority. We had such a trial in my constituency. The Government were involved in that expenditure and the private water companies could not recover that cost. There are hidden charges in this paving Bill and my right hon. Friend has every right to express his concern about them. We all share his concern and I hope that he will develop his points further because they should be revealed in every detail.

Mr. Williams: My hon. Friend is very helpful.

What would happen if an industry incurred another £39 million of expenditure in order to facilitate moves towards franchising—which happens to be the hobby-horse, or hobby-train, of the Secretary of State? What would happen if the Secretary of State were replaced by the equivalent of Cecil Parkinson—I am not sure what we call him now—

Mrs. Dunwoody: Viscount Branson?

Mr. Williams: Has he been enobled already? I must have missed that. I apologise; I meant no disrespect.

What would happen if we had a new Secretary of State for Transport when the main legislation was introduced? What would happen if the new Secretary of State were more impressed with what Viscount whatever-his-name-is had to say than with what the present Secretary of State has to say? Who would pick up the bills? Would there be compensation for the Government if they changed their mind? They might claim that they did not reveal what they were thinking and that they had not enacted anything yet. They might claim that they were simply having talks. If that were the case, the customer would pick up the bill.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I want to raise a point with the right hon. Gentleman because we both served on the Public Accounts Committee and both considered privatisation costs. Those costs are huge. Does not the right hon. Gentleman believe that the Bill would help to clear away doubt and confusion, so that, when and if privatisation occurs, it will be more focused and concentrated, thus saving more money in the long run?

Mr. Williams: The Bill does nothing of the sort. It simply adds extra obscurity. The hon. Gentleman's point about privatisation being better financially for the taxpayer in future echoed a point made by the Secretary of State earlier. He said that privatisation will

"undoubtedly give the taxpayer good value for money."

The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) sat beside me when I asked the former permanent

secretary at the Department of the Environment about the privatisation of water. That industry was one of the first industries to be affected by a Bill like this one.

From my questioning, it became clear that 10 companies worth £34·6 billion were sold for £3·5 billion —ten were sold for the price of one. Undoubtedly, that gave taxpayers good value for money. I asked the then permanent secretary about the cost, but he said that one could not take it into account and that we should consider the value on the stock exchange. I asked him how much it would cost the 10 companies to set up the industry today. I asked whether they could set it up for £3·4 billion. He told me that it would cost £34 billion to recreate the industry. That good value for taxpayers' money was £1 back for £10 that the taxpayers put in in respect of the water industry.

We also provided a cash injection of £1·5 billion. I asked the former permanent secretary whose money that was and he told me that it was taxpayers' money; yet the Secretary of State still says that privatisation will undoubtedly give taxpayers "good value for money".

It did not end there. We are talking about industries that are not known for their profitability. We also wrote off £5 billion-worth of debts to the national loans fund which was providing an income to the taxpayer of £500 million a year. Having provided a £1·5 million cash injection and £34 billion-worth of assets for a mere £3·5 billion, we then provided £7 billion-worth of tax allowances so that future profits could be written off against those tax allowances. That was the first time in a takeaway that the teller paid the customer. Private companies have walked away with industries and they are bleeding their customers now despite the massive subsidies that they have already received from the Government.

The Government face problems in relation to such major industries. They do not know how to get rid of them. They are simply driven to get rid of them. They think, "If it's publicly owned, get rid of it." They know that they cannot get rid of the whole railway industry. It is a loss-maker and always was. It was a loss-maker before it was nationalised. It was a loss-maker before the wars.

Even under private ownership, the railways have always existed on the basis of cross-subsidisation. In the days of GWR, LMS, LNER and Southern Rail, the profitable lines subsidised the non-profitable ones. What will happen now? We know what will happen. The cream of profit from one sector which previously helped to subsidise the feeder lines will be hived off to the private sector. So where will the money come from for the feeder lines? It will either come from the customer or the taxpayer —more likely the taxpayer—or it will come from cuts in services.

We have already had an indication that the Government intend to cut services. The Secretary of State said something which I must admit I have not heard before. He said that privatisation could mean selling off stations. Why does one sell off stations if one is not getting rid of the services that go through them? The Government are already planning for the cuts that will be made as a result of giving the profit to private shareholders. At present, that profit goes to subsidise the commuters. We in Wales know very well that our local services, our mid-Wales service and even our high-speed service between Cardiff and Swansea are likely to be casualties of the process. The Secretary of State called the Bill a small Bill. It is a small Bill which combines constitutional obscenity with industrial absurdity.

5.31 pm

Mr. Iain Sproat (Harwich): As this is my first speech as Member of Parliament for Harwich, before I speak strongly to support the Bill, I wish to take this opportunity to pay great tribute to my predecessor, Sir Julian Ridsdale. He represented Harwich for some 38 years with great distinction as both a Minister and a Back Bencher. For all those years, he served the constituency faithfully and well, and he has left an enormous legacy of respect, admiration and affection—feelings of respect, admiration and affection which cross party lines. I am sure that hon. Members from all parties wish to send their good wishes to Sir Julian in his retirement.

I said that I supported the Bill, and I do so for two broad reasons. The first is because, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, it paves the way for more privatisation. In my opinion, privatisation has proved itself demonstrably and comprehensively successful, whereas nationalisation has equally comprehensively proved itself a failure.

There are many ways of judging the success or failure of privatisation and nationalisation, but I suggest that one clear, practical and straightforward way is to ask two simple questions. First, which system provides the individual customer with the best service? Secondly, which system is most economically successful? If we take an industry such as British Telecom, of which we have had experience as both a nationalised and a privatised industry, the answer to the first question can hardly be in doubt. There cannot be a Member of the House of Commons who does not remember that, when British Telecom was nationalised, one had to wait weeks, months or even up to a year for a new telephone. Today, a new telephone is available on demand.

In the days of nationalisation, when one obtained a telephone it was either black or white. It was of a simple design. One could not say what one liked. Practically every telephone kiosk one tried to use was vandalised and out of use. Today, 96 per cent. of public telephones are in working order. When one made an appointment for someone to come and fix one's telephone, British Telecom would not say whether someone would come in the morning or afternoon. It would not tell one if it came not at all. It would not say whether it would give compensation. In contrast, today, under privatisation, one can make an appointment for the morning or the afternoon. If by chance the engineers do not turn up, there is guaranteed customer compensation.

The benefits that arise from privatisation seem clear beyond dispute. Of course one must be careful about making comparisons in too much detail, but I cannot believe, certainly after Question Time today, that there is a person in the country who would claim that the nationalised British Rail, which is one of the industries with which the Bill deals, is better than the now privatised British Airways in any respect—whether care for the customer, efficiency or profit. Whether one takes an industry that was nationalised and is now privatised or compares an industry which is still nationalised with one in a roughly similar sector, the success of privatisation is massively apparent.

[Mr. Iain Sproat]

The second question that I suggested one ought to ask was whether nationalisation or privatisation had been economically successful. We all know that the history of nationalisation from 1945 onwards has been studded with gigantic losses. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave us some staggering figures for the British coal industry, but no doubt, when we come to the Bill for which today's Bill paves the way, we shall be able to discuss the coal industry in much more detail.

When British Airways was privatised about five years ago, the chairman said that the losses of all nationalised industries since 1945 had amounted to more than £200 billion. Successive Governments had to fund the losses of that nationalised industry. Think what could be done with that money to provide better schools, houses, pensions and roads.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to wider share ownership as a result of privatisation. I believe that the figures are that, in 1979, when the privatisation programme started, about 1·5 million individuals in Britain owned shares. Today that figure has risen to about 12 million—a real redistribution of wealth away from the state to the individual family. Not only is that the type of redistribution of wealth that we want to see in Britain, but a high proportion of those employed in former nationalised industries own shares in them. Some 90 per cent. of employees of the National Freight Consortium own shares in their business. More than 90 per cent. of the employees of British Airways own shares in that business. That must be good for the stability and profitability of those businesses.

I said that I strongly supported the Bill for two reasons. The first was because it leads to privatisation. The reasons that I have given are what one might call the reasons looked at from the outside. But I have a second reason. When I was previously a Member of Parliament, I was lucky enough to be the Minister of Aviation and Shipping when we were preparing British Airways for privatisation. British Airways was still a nationalised industry.

I was horrified when I looked into the internal workings of the running of a nationalised industry and the mechanisms by which the sponsoring Government Department ran it. I saw how Government Departments interfered in the commercial running of the business in both great and small matters. Government Departments would interfere with the most minute commercial matters and prevent the business from being run properly.

In 1982, I discovered that there was no financial director on the main board of British Airways—it was absolutely amazing—although the company was about to turn in losses of £544 million and had a debt of £1·2 billion. The then and present chairman of British Airways, Lord King—a splendid man—found a finance director and agreed what to pay him. I had to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to ask if that was alright. To my amazement, the Chancellor wrote back saying that he thought that we were overpaying him by about 20 per cent. The absurd epistolary ping-pong went on for months between the old Department of Trade and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who said that Lord King was wrong and did not know how much Gordon Dunlop—that great man who became the finance director—ought to have been paid.

I am arguing in support of what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said earlier. The Treasury was interfering in the way in which British Airways was run, by not allowing it to appoint the finance director that it considered necessary at a time when it was facing gigantic losses and had a vast debt.

I saw the internal workings of the Department of Trade vis-a-vis industry and its absurd interference in commercial decisions. Almost without exception, the customer came second to the vested interests of the industry, and the Department and the industry colluded in that. The interests of British Airways passengers came second.

I also saw the way in which the private sector always came second to the interests of British Airways. Other public sector bodies, such as Manchester airport, also came second because they were not a sponsored industry in the same sense as British Airways was. Ministers and Governments of all parties interfered to put the interests of the nationalised industry above those of the customer and of other private sector companies, and thus did them down.

Mr. Prescott: Why did the Government nationalise Rolls-Royce?

Mr. Sproat: I saw the absurd financial distortions which resulted—the losses written off, and the subsidies and grants given. The mushy fudge of public dividend capital was merely an excuse to dish out money to nationalised industries without any real return. I do not know whether any nationalised industry has ever paid a dividend on its public dividend capital. I do not think that British Airways ever did. It was just another excuse to inject money into nationalised industries, money that they were not competitive enough to earn.

I also witnessed costly time-wasting exercises. Executives in nationalised industries prepared corporate plans and explained them to civil servants, then tinkered with them and readjusted them after discussions. The civil servants and the Department then went over the plans, saying that they did not like this, or that had to be changed. They rewrote them, fixing performance and financial targets. Once the Government Department had gone over the plans with the company, the Treasury then had to go over them. The company, the Department and the Treasury spent endless hours tinkering about with corporate plans.

Mr. Prescott: Why did the Government nationalise Rolls-Royce?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Member knows well that sedentary interruptions of that kind are to be deplored.

Mr. Sproat: The Government's policies have done so much to get rid of another aspect of what was badly wrong with the relationship between Government Departments and nationalised industries—nationalised industries' preferential access to the ears of Ministers and civil servants. That is why I welcome the Bill, because it will get rid of that problem with British Coal and, in part at least, with British Rail. The industries were allowed access to Ministers and civil servants, which enabled them to affect relevant policies as they were being made, and to ensure that the policies were more in their interests than in those of the customer or of private sector companies.

When I was at the Department of Trade, I think that it would be true to say that, if the chairman of British Airways ever wanted to see me, he usually did so within 24 hours. However, if the chairman of Britannia or British Midland—two fine airlines—wanted to see me, it would be difficult. They would be told that the Minister's diary was booked up and several weeks would pass by, because they did not have a proper arrangement.

Nationalised industries got preferential treatment. As a result, there was a cosy consensus between the nationalised industry and the Department. The Department did not wish it to be that way—it just happened because of years of preferential access and agreement between civil servants and the industry.

For example, the busiest internal air routes in the United Kingdom were, and perhaps still are, Heathrow to Glasgow, and Heathrow to Edinburgh. Yet the Government had granted British Airways a monopoly of those routes. The chairman of British Midland said, "I'd like to have a go at that monopoly and compete with British Airways." I had to consider the matter. Without violating any detailed advice that I received, in the new spirit of Government Departments being opened up I can reveal that not one person or body asked for official advice recommended that there should be competition. Everyone recommended that the monopoly should remain.

We broke that monopoly, and what happened? We got more services, lower prices, a better service and a wider range of fares. Everybody was pleased. Everything that is supposed to happen under competition happened. Given that that was such an obvious case—the busiest route in the country—one must ask oneself why, under a Conservative Government, no competition was allowed. The answer is that years of preferential access had constructed a cosy consensus, whereby the values of British Airways—which had the monopoly—gained a monopoly over the culture of the Department. That was an evil thing, and privatisation has helped to sweep it away.

I welcome the Bill, because it will provide for more competition. I hope that it will sweep away such problems in two other industries. I look forward to the Bill bringing closer the day when British Rail will be as efficient and profitable, and thoughtful and caring for its passengers, as British Airways.

5.48 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I am interested to follow the hon. Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat), who, on the previous occasion, left the House as I came in. No doubt he will be hoping that the people of Harwich prove a little more stable than the people of south Aberdeen, who have had five Members of Parliament, not one, in the past 25 years. His style and approach do not seem to have suffered from his absence, and no doubt we shall be hearing more from him. He has warned us how Ministers can become prisoners of their Department. One wonders why he did not change the Department.

Mr. Sproat: I did.

Mr. Bruce: One does not necessarily have to turn the ownership and structure of an industry upside down to reform it. If that were the only way forward, Ministers would have a limited course of action open to them.

I shall tackle both aspects of the Bill, taking the coal industry first. The Bill is, of course, an enabling one. It is relatively general and it is about bringing private money to and the restructuring of both industries. Liberal Democrats believe that the coal industry needs restructuring and that it needs access to private capital. The same is true of the railways. The terms of the Bill are necessary and acceptable because we recognise that anybody who is to change either of the industries would need such a Bill.

The real areas of potential division will arise when the detailed proposals for each industry are published. That was achnowledged by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley). However, I echo the view that, in the past, money has been spent on paving the way for privatisation in an unnecessarily profligate manner. One hopes that by going through such a process as set out in the Bill and having a proper and systematic explanation of events, we will not see such substantial amounts of public money squandered as a sweetener for privatisation. However, at present, the Government do not appear clear about the way forward.

I am worried about the Bill and the words in the Queen's Speech that state that the Government will bring forward proposals to return British Coal to the private sector. I remind the Government that British Coal was never in the private sector. It is an extraordinary idea to return it to a place from which it never came. The implication behind the Government's statement is rather worrying and I hope that the hon. Member for Harwich can see exactly why that is so.

It is proposed to take British Coal as a single entity, and to transfer it as such to the private sector. There are no proposals to introduce competition into the coal industry or to open it up to possible employee participation or that of other groups. The Minister is looking quizzical, but the Queen's Speech talks of returning the industry to the private sector. If the industry is to be sold as a single entity, perhaps even offered to a multinational company, I assure the Minister that the Liberal Democrats will oppose it.

We will seek to press the Government to use a little more imagination and flexibility than they have with some of their previous privatisations. On two previous occasions, I tabled amendments to coal Bills to try to change the basis on which coal is owned and how it is licensed. Under current legislation, British Coal is the owner of all coal reserves in the United Kingdom. It would be quite inappropriate to transfer the company, in whatever form, to the private sector should it continue to be the owner of all coal assets in the United Kingdom, whether mined or not.

I suggest that this is an appropriate time for the Government to follow something similar to the practice for oil and gas reserves—to transfer the ownership of coal to the Crown and license it through, perhaps, a Crown agency. That agency could be the regulator for the coal industry and of the extraction of coal and it could set the conditions under which the licences operated and determine to whom they should be allocated. In those circumstances, the industry could be opened up to more than one company and there could be different approaches and tests.

Mining is a matter of judgment, as well as of knowledge and technology. Different people have different views on the efficient and competitive extraction of coal. That suggests that, to benefit from such different approaches, more than one company should operate our pits.

[Mr. Bruce]

The Minister will know that I have taken a particular interest in the mining consortium that is seeking to operate Monktonhall colliery in Midlothian. At present, British Coal has provisionally allocated a licence to that consortium, and negotiations are under way on the terms under which the colliery will be taken over. My up-to-date information is that a meeting will take place next Monday between the consortium and senior British Coal officials to discuss the future. Evidence will be given that the consortium has sufficient capital to run the colliery efficiently and safely.

The consortium is looking for a 10-year licence. Its members have each agreed to contribute £10,000 of their own money, which is five times their original pledge. Those people are ex-miners, and they are prepared to put up £10,000 of their own money to take over the pit that they used to operate. They say that they will be supported financially by the Clydesdale bank, the TSB, the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Bank of Scotland. I do not know the terms of that support, and questions have been raised in the past few weeks as to whether it will be a viable proposition. I hope that it will prove feasible for the consortium to take over the pit and that it will be able to demonstrate success in the production of coal where British Coal has previously failed.

My only regret is that, until six months ago, the Government's attitude towards that consortium was one of indifference, if not hostility. The Labour party's attitude was sustained and total hostility until it looked as if the consortium would be successful in obtaining the licence for the pit. The members of the consortium have demonstrated real commitment, and I believe that that proposal is the way forward. If that consortium succeeds, I hope that it will prove a model for others to follow.

A detail arises, on which I hope that the Government will be responsive. If the consortium is successful, as it intends to be, it will quickly reach the ceiling, under current legislation, on the number of people that is is entitled to employ under the existing licence. Presumably, once the coal industry is privatised, all terms and conditions will change. If that situation arises and the consortium reaches the ceiling before the completion of the process of privatisation, will the Government be responsive and receptive so that the consortium is not left at a disadvantage?

That example shows why British Coal cannot possibly continue to be the sole licensor for the rights of extraction. If it is the major producer, it cannot control who else is allowed to enter the market and on what terms and conditions. British Coal cannot be regarded as an unbiased or disinterested party. I hope that the Minister will be able to respond constructively, at least in principle, to those points, which I hope that he agrees are important.

The coal industry has been starved of some of the research and development funding that is available to other energy-producing industries. In the context of privatisation, I hope that the Government will recognise the need for continued research and development into more environmentally friendly ways of using coal, whether through gasification, carbon reduction or other more efficient mechanisms. I hope that privatisation will not lead to a further reduction in research funding.

There are two problems facing the industry. The first is that our European competitors continue to subsidise their coal industries. I thought that the European Commission had a piece of cheek to suggest that we should follow suit when its job in trying to create the single market in Europe, should be to require our competitors to end the subsidies to enable British Coal to operate on a fair and equal footing.

The second problem results from the prior privatisation of the electricity industry, which has created an effective duopoly controlling the market for coal. Without going into details, the privatisation of British Coal reinforces the case for restructuring a genuine competitive market for electricity in a way that ensures that all sources of fuel have genuine access to the market and that the monopoly of the main electricity producers is not allowed to squeeze the new privatised coal industry unfairly.

I have both a party and a constituency interest in the railways, which are of considerable importance to the north-east of Scotland. Among the other hon. Members who are seeking to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we may find that some of the points that I make are held across the party divide. Our concern has already been brought out in the debate. People continually refer to the east coast main line as being between Edinburgh and London. This causes anger and outrage in Aberdeen, because we think that that is the prevailing view, and that that is why electrification has stopped at Edinburgh. There is a substantial and important chunk of Scotland north of Edinburgh that makes an important contribution to the general wealth of the United Kingdom economy, and it is entitled to be treated rather better than it has been in recent years in terms of services and investment.

For some time, there has been a campaign for the electrification of the line between Edinburgh and Aberdeen. The question that we shall ask of privatisation is whether it is more or less likely to result in further electrification. I was not being facetious or cheeky when I wrote to the managing director of Stagecoach saying that the people of the north-east would naturally welcome the fact that his company was providing a service that had been withdrawn by British Rail, and that we would also welcome his company's support for the campaign for railway electrification of the route on which he was now providing a service.

The question that arises out of this is why Stagecoach can operate a service with a train that is pulled by a British Rail engine, on a fare basis no different from that of British Rail, but can do so at a profit where British Rail could not. That has implications for the future management and direction of the service. However, passengers in the north-east of Scotland welcome the fact that there is now seated accommodation where there had not been for a while. We hope that this will continue.

The impressionist Rory Bremner says that the Prime Minister comes from a long line of train spotters. That makes me a little concerned about the proposals for the franchising of services. I can see the populist appeal of the idea of going back to the romantic days of the Great Western railway, of LMS and LNER. However, as has been said, we have to remember that none of these companies made a profit. They may be romantic in retrospect, but they were not efficient. Much of the competition was cut-throat, to the disadvantage of the shareholder and the travelling public.

I am sceptical about the proposals on how to deal with British Rail. The expression "cherry picking" has been used to express our natural concern that private companies will choose to pick out the best and most profitable services and leave the Cinderella services either with nobody to operate them or requiring an even greater subsidy because profitable services have been withdrawn from British Rail's revenue-earning base. The question that the Government have to answer is whether British Rail, as franchise holder, would generate more revenue from the private companies than it could by providing the service itself. At this stage, the Government's plans are so shrouded in mystery that it remains unclear whether that will or can be achieved.

There is a line north of Aberdeen as well, running to Inverness, which a previous Transport Minister described as a branch line, but which is an important service to the people in the north-east of Scotland. This case illustrates our concern over whether railway transport is being given fair and equal treatment on all fours with the roads.

I see that a Minister from the Scottish Office is here. He will know the background to the campaign that I have been running, which is aimed at upgrading the A96. I make no apology for that, given the traffic and the population of the north-east of Scotland. A parliamentary question elicited the information that this road was more dangerous than the A74, which is being upgraded to motorway status. In the Minister's presence, I will say that I welcome the fact that the campaign produced a positive response. The Government have made a commitment to upgrading, and next month there will be a seminar to discuss how that programme can continue.

However, if we do not make full use of the railway line that runs alongside the road, we shall increase the problems—such as the passenger traffic that uses the road because the rail service is inadequate, and the freight that will be forced on to the road. The proposal to discontinue freight carrying other than by train loads threatened a massive discharge on to the road of additional lorries from the paper mills and the timber and whisky industries. We have managed to negotiate ways to keep freight transport going, but only on a short-time basis. If we fail in the long term, and Railfreight does not continue to provide a service, an enormous number of lorries will take to that road, which will have a detrimental effect on all users.

I have a regular flow of complaints from passengers on the line who say that the quality of the stations is appalling. In Huntly, some taxi drivers have refused to take passengers to the station because of the potholes in the drive. When I went to look at them, they had suddenly and mysteriously been filled in, but only temporarily. Trains are overcrowded to the point where there are more people standing than sitting, but British Rail will not provide additional trains. That is one of the negative effects of investment on the cheap. The new rolling stock is inferior to the stock that was there before. The trains are smaller and do not provide the same standard of comfort, while their reliability has been far from what we would wish.

There are campaigns to open additional stations so that the line can tap more traffic. One of the most successful station openings in the north-east of Scotland was that of Dyce in my constituency, which now carries over 1,000 passengers a day in and out of Aberdeen, to the great benefit of road users as well as to the passengers themselves. We thought that we might get a station opened at Kintore and we got close to it, but have now been told that there is a shortage of land for British Rail, which does not seem to me to be a satisfactory excuse.

A few years ago, there was a manager in the north-east of Scotland, John Gough, who believed that his job was to ensure that the railway services responded to the travelling public. He was so successful in doing this, and therefore so popular, that British Rail gave him early retirement. That was not what it was looking for in the rail service in the north-east of Scotland, but it is what the public are looking for and it is what we expect.

When the White Paper is published, we shall ask how an area such as the north-east of Scotland, which contributes so much to the national economy, can ensure that it gets a fair share of investment in railway and road transport. How can we be sure that the privatisation of the railways takes on board the contribution that the railways can make to both keeping traffic off the roads and encouraging a switch? That does not mean that we do not need investment in roads, but it does mean that we need to make best use of our railway assets.

Tourist traffic on the line has considerable potential, and as a result there is a desire to run steam trains on it, but London prices make no sense. The potential for developing tourist services will be apparent only if a Scottish company is entitled to determine the prices in terms of what the Scottish market will bear. At the moment, InterCity in London imposes an absurd price for the locomotive that is out of all proportion to what the market can realistically bear, and that effectively kills off any tourist initiative in the north-east of Scotland before it gets off the ground.

The Bill paves the way for two important privatisation measures, and we shall have ample opportunities to debate them. I hope that Ministers will respond to my points about how coal should be restructured. I hope that they will take on board the practical points for the north-east of Scotland. These are real issues which the public will determine. They will decide whether they believe that the privatisation of British Rail is for the good of the passenger, or simply for the good of those who will make money out of it.

6.10 pm

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): I rise for the first time in the Chamber to welcome the Bill. The way in which privatisations took place during the 1980s gives us hope that the Bill will prove to be greatly popular with the public. I know, however, that it is exceedingly risky to start any parliamentary career by talking about coal. Disraeli nearly scuppered his chances of a fine career by early speculation in mines. However, anything that can be done to improve the rail service must be good news. I have been impressed by the fairness that has been shown by hon. Members on both sides of the House during the debate, and I have to say, in fairness, that my train was two minutes early this morning.

I come to the Chamber with some modesty. I was experienced as a barrister and I declare an interest—although I have not had briefs for many years from this source—because I represented the National Union of Mineworkers. I have great admiration for miners and I obtained compensation for them for going down pits and getting dust in their lungs as they worked. I have great admiration for the way in which they risked life and limb.

[Mr. Hartley Booth]

Whatever else happens as a result of the Bill and the subsequent privatisation Bill—I shall ask my hon. Friend the Minister for certain assurances—I hope that the safety of miners will be assured. I used to sue that great colossus, the National Coal Board, and we now want to take its successor off its pedestal on behalf of miners and on behalf of the public generally. I wish the Bill a good start and a fair wind.

As the new Member for Finchley, it would be wrong of me not to pay a warm tribute to my predecessor. My seat has been kept well and truly warm, if not hot, for the past 33 years. Few could be called to follow greater. In her time, the world respect for Margaret Thatcher was a phenomenon. She gives the lie to those who call anti-federalists little Englanders. Margaret Thatcher was determined to raise the status of Great Britain and she pushed back the frontiers of socialism with her policies. She was determined to see the United Kingdom have a world role. She wanted to see horizons pushed back across the world for the people of this country.

Margaret Thatcher came to the House in 1959 and it might amaze some people that she was here for two years before making her maiden speech. Patience, however, was part of her demeanour. In 1989, she said:

"I am extraordinarily patient providing that I get my own way in the end."

She had the will of an iron lady, but it was married with practicality. In 1986, she said:

"No one would remember the good Samaritan if he had only had good intentions; he had to have money as well."

Margaret Thatcher was deeply practical. She will be remembered by those who were close to her for her phenomenal energy and amazing hard work. Those who worked closest to her knew that come 1 o'clock in the morning she would be saying, "I get a new lease of life at this time of day." She will be remembered in Finchley for her assiduous hard work. She never turned aside a letter from a constituent, and constituents whom I have met in Finchley were devoted to her. Indeed, there was a feeling of love for Mrs. Thatcher.

Behind Margaret Thatcher was Finchley and the allied place of Friern Barnet, a place of mediaeval origin. Friern Barnet is known not for its culinary past but because of the friars who lived there. Finchley is a constituency which was known ultimately from Australia to Alaska because of its Member. It had the sort of fame that doubtless is now being earned by Huntingdon. The inhabitants of Finchley, whom I am proud to represent, valued their British independence, about which Margaret Thatcher spoke so eloquently in the Chamber. They do not want to be citizens of another country and they want to see our country strong. They certainly do not want orders from another country, but that presages a debate that will take place later in the week. They will value the benefits that will flow from the Bill that is before us if it leads to privatisation. They will value cheaper and better coal production, as they will value better services on the railway.

I seek assurances from my hon. Friend the Minister. First, I want to be assured that part of the programme that will be worked on during the progress of this paving Bill and beyond will permit shares to be owned by miners and others who work in the coal industry. Part of the success of the privatisation programme during the 1980s was that those who drove trucks for the National Freight Corporation, for example, were allowed to own part of their trucks as a result of share ownership. I want to see miners have a stake in the mines from which they bring coal.

Secondly, whatever else is done during the process leading towards privatisation, I ask for the assurance that thought will be given to ensuring that Britain has the necessary powers to stop international predatory dumping. Any private coal industry that has to suffer international dumping will be weakened and could be killed. The European Community has powers to stop such dumping and they are useful, but we must look to our national needs.

Thirdly, I ask for an assurance that the new environmental regime that must be considered alongside coal privatisation will not be so draconian that any private sector proposition is immediately snuffed out or killed off. It must not be forgotten, however, that the polluter must pay. We must have a balance, but that must be considered as a package. I hope that we shall be given an assurance that environmental considerations will continue behind the scenes.

The House would not be considering the Bill but for my predecessor in Finchley. I look forward to its safe passage and beyond that to the privatisation of the coal industry and British Rail. However, I have a warning for my colleagues on the Government Front Bench. If my hon. Friend the Minister gives the assurances for which I have asked, takes the necessary steps and moves on to privatisation, the process will be so popular that there will be a strong risk that he will have to bear office in a fifth term of Conservative government.

6.19 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth). I suspect that not a few Conservative Members, let alone Labour Members, are pleased to see him here. He fulfilled the conventions while also making an interesting speech. As I make my relatively short speech, I hope that Conservative Members will hear a slight echo of one or two of the demands that he made. It is interesting to listen to a Conservative Member who has at least a little knowledge of the mining industry and a significant and welcome concern for it. We look forward to hearing him in future. His speech this afternoon was certainly memorable.

The House will be aware of my dominant interest in the mining industry, so I shall not say much about the railway industry. However, it is a bit much for Conservative Members to talk about privatisation resulting in a timely, cheap, comfortable and efficient rail service. We do not have to go far to find wise central Governments who recognise the benefits of efficient, publicly owned railways. France, Germany and Switzerland are models for that. Their Governments have had their supportive arms around the shoulders of their rail industries while the British Government have had our industry by the throat. That is one reason why Conservative Members come up with successive complaints, when in fact they have not perceived who bears the responsibility for the inadequate investment in and the costly fares charged by British Rail.

My main concern is with the coal industry and I want to repeat some of the points raised in the debate. Above all, when the Minister for Energy replies to the debate, I

want him to assure us that the Government will ensure that there is a long-term future for the coal industry. I want him also to assure us that the contracts that are about to be signed will sustain the industry rather than plunge Britain into a state of energy dependency that results in extensive and ever-rising balance of payments deficits and further bitter blows to mining areas.

We need a guarantee that, even if the industry is to be privatised, and even if the Government wash their hands of it, a viable deep-mine industry will remain in Britain. We need that not only because of the interests of the industry but because, as the Minister should recognise, the mining engineering industry and its related activities face a growing world demand as man scratches ever more deeply into the surface of this planet for mineral resources. If we do not have an adequate home base for the development and sustenance of mining technology, we will throw away important economic opportunities for this country.

We need a substantial and continuing coal industry. It is little use Conservative Members suggesting that miners invest in their pits when, given the precedents of recent years, they would have grounds for real anxiety about that investment. With the Government's encouragement, British Coal invested substantial sums in collieries that were closed only weeks or months later. That has brought a sense of bewilderment and horror to the people in mining constituencies who have witnessed that thwarted intention.

The hon. Member for Finchley referred to mine safety. He may not be aware of this, but I am sponsored by the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers. Because of his previous experience, he will be aware that that association now has only a small number of members, but they are the men charged not only with the supervision of production underground but with the basic and statutory responsibility for safety. They have made a marked contribution to ensuring that the British mining industry is the safest in the world.

There are those on the Conservative Benches—there may still be some in Hobart house—who were happy with the prospect of the statutory base upon which that safety was built being squandered and turned into a reliance upon a voluntary code with a great deal less force and meaning. Before any further steps are taken on the road to privatisation, the Government must make it clear that that statutory base will not be removed. It must be retained, if only because if it is not, the Government will be seen to be running a coach and horses through the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974.

I do not have time to go into detail on that matter, as others have done in the past, but I trust that the Minister will not lose sight of it. It is of fundamental importance because precedents show that without such a statutory authority and without proper concern, privatisation will mean that more lives are lost and more blood is spilt. That is the price of privatisation that may be placed on the coalfields of Britain.

I want to stress a few other points. First, we need assurances about the concessionary fuel scheme. Secondly, we need assurances about the pension funds. It is a fact that the pension funds in the British mining industry today may be worth more than the industry itself. Although we may get assurances and fine words from Ministers, the fact remains that there are more greedy people around than the Government care to admit. Robert Maxwell was not the only one to take an interest in pension funds. There will be greedy people who will recognise the vast size of the pension funds in the mining industry. Maxwell's actions have given rise to genuine anxiety and we need to be sure that there are absolute and clear structures of protection to prevent greedy people—who are more likely to support the Minister and his hon. Friends than Labour Members—from running riot through the pension funds of the mining industry.

There has already been a passing reference to the fact that, if the mining industry is sold for the sort of figure that the Treasury perceives to be likely under the estimates of public income and expenditure, unless there is a system that separates the ownership of the coal from the ownership of the industry, the Government may adopt the most prodigal and profligate attitude witnessed in modern times. On the basis of the Treasury calculations, if the coal is sold together with the mining industry, it would mean that the Government would be disposing of the country's coal reserves for 2p or 3p a tonne. Even in these days when people seem to believe that nuclear power, gas and oil should have priority, it would be scandalous for the country's coal reserves to be treated so flagrantly and irresponsibly.

Adequate attention must be paid to those matters and also to the needs of the country. People need to be shown that the Government are taking the privatisation of the mining industry rather more seriously than they did some of the previous privatisations, when the people were softened by skilled television presentations. The prices were increased in advance to falsify the prosperity and the profitability of those industries.

We need evidence and information. As I said to the Secretary of State in an intervention, perhaps this is not the time to expect the Government to give detailed information about their plans. I trust that the House will be given an ample opportunity to consider seriously and properly all the matters that I mentioned before any final decisions are made. As matters stand, and bearing in mind the Government's record, the decisions that we fear are likely to come from the Department of Trade and Industry will not be welcome on this side of the House.

Although the Government claim to have a mandate, the Minister for Energy must confess that it has not been provided by the constituencies that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I represent.

6.29 pm

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to catch your eye, so that I may address the House for the first time. It is a tremendous privilege to be here as the new Member of Parliament for Aberdeen, South. It is with great pride that I take my seat as a new Scottish Member of Parliament —and on this occasion if no other, right hon. and hon. Members may allow me to remind them that, yes, I am also a new Scottish Conservative Member of Parliament.

Right hon. and hon. Members who know Aberdeen and Aberdonians will not be surprised to learn that Aberdeen, South is back in the Conservative fold. Mine is a diverse constituency of many contrasts. It has captured the old and blended it uniquely with the new. It can boast a magnificant past, and look forward to a bright and formidable future. My constituency has, sadly, seen in recent times the end of some of its traditional industries,

[Mr. Raymond S. Robertson]

such as shipbuilding and deep sea fishing, but it has not been frightened to reach out and to embrace new industries. Most notable among them are the oil and oil support industries. Aberdeen, South had adapted to change in a dynamic and positive way. The Aberdeen that stands on the threshold of a new century is one of which its forefathers would have been justifiably proud.

My constituency covers the southern part of that great city stretching from western end down to its commercial hub, to the beach, and to Pittodrie—the home of Aberdeen football club. It takes in world-famous Union street, and extends across the River Dee to its southern boundary. Beyond that is the North sea. It includes Aberdeen's buoyant international harbour, which, since a Conservative Government had the courage to abolish the national dock labour scheme in 1989, has enjoyed some of its best years ever.

I am well aware that most new Members of Parliament are haunted by the ghosts of their predecessors. I am not so much haunted by the ghosts of Members of Parliament past as plagued by their reincarnations. I arrived here to find myself elected president of one of the House's most exclusive and select dining clubs. I refer to that patronised also by former Members of Parliament for Aberdeen, South who are still Members of Parliament. Its membership is cross-party and includes the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who represented my constituency between 1966 and 1970; my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat), who spoke earlier, and who is the longest-serving member of the club—having sat for Aberdeen, South from 1970 to 1983; and my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone), who has just arrived, who served the constituency from 1983 to 1987.

I should not be too unkind about my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester, because it has been said to me often that greater love hath no man than this: that he loses his seat so that his friend can win it back. My right hon. and hon. Friends will be pleased to know that membership of that exclusive club is now closed, because I intend to remain its newest recruit for a long time.

Apart from existing Members of Parliament who once represented Aberdeen, South, I must make mention of my immediate predecessor, Frank Doran. I want to thank him on behalf of my constituents for his time as their Member of Parliament, when he represented them in the House and worked on their behalf outside it. It would be wrong and totally insincere of me to wish Frank Doran well politically, but I do so at a personal level. Perhaps his former boss, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), will convey my best wishes to Frank Doran.

Aberdeen's wealth and prosperity is very much based on the oil and gas industry. The rapid expansion of that and related industries has brought tremendous benefits to the city and to its people. Oil, in common with coal, is one of this country's most precious natural resources. Unlike coal, however, it is relatively new on the British scene. It is little more than 25 years ago that the first significant discoveries of North sea oil and gas were made. Few then could have expected or predicted what would follow—and if they had, even fewer would have believed them.

In just over a quarter of a century, the United Kingdom has become one of the world's biggest producers of offshore oil and gas, creating 100,000 jobs. In the 1990s, North sea oil continues to be an outstanding success story for Britain and free enterprise. The unprecedented investment in, and expansion of, the United Kingdom continental shelf over the past 10 years occurred because the Government allowed the private sector to get to work and to get on with it. I say to Opposition Members who are fearful of a privatised coal industry that they should not be. The challenges may seem great, but so, too, are the opportunities.

Much concern has been expressed, rightly, and will continue to be expressed about the danger of coal mining and the industry's inherent risks. Unlike coal, the greatest obstacle that our oil and gas industry has to overcome is nature itself. The North sea can boast—if that is the right word—some of the most hostile and treacherous conditions anywhere in the world. They are not easy for most of us to imagine—waves up to 80 ft high, freezing air temperatures, thick fog blankets falling at any time, and wild gusts and violent storms daily. In any one year, 250 days will be officially designated as bad.

Those who work in such conditions day after day deserve the highest praise. Just as the North sea is a vibrant, healthy, free enterprise success, so, too, can be the coalfields of Britain. As the Government get down to the detailed job of returning coal to the private sector, I urge them to consider operating a licensing system similar to that which operates in the North sea. I agree with the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) that our traditional coal industry should learn a trick or two from its younger offshore brother.

Private enterprise never flourishes unless the right climate is created by the Government—and they have unquestionably done so in the North sea through their licensing policy. Such an imaginative scheme can do the same for a private coal industry. The purpose of a licensing policy is fourfold, and can be directly translated from the oil fields of the North sea to the coalfields of Britain.

A licensing policy enables companies to compete and to operate commercially; ensures that exploration is undertaken thoroughly, expeditiously, and—most importantly—safely; maximises the economic exploitation of resources; and ensures that a fair share of financial and economic benefits of exploration is enjoyed by the entire nation.

Such a regime, translated from oil to coal, can give this country's proud coal industry a second chance and a very real future. It will enable the industry to look forward to the next century with new-found confidence.

6.38 pm

Mr. Keith Hill (Streatham): I congratulate the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robinson) on the fluency of his maiden speech. I rise with a sense of awe and history to make my own maiden speech. Since its creation as a separate seat in 1918, Streatham has always been represented by Conservative Members of Parliament. On 9 April 1992, for the first time ever, Streatham elected a Labour Member of Parliament. The voters of Streatham made a little bit of history that day. Interestingly, it was made in the London borough of Lambeth.

Among my many distinguished predecessors, perhaps the most notable was the late Lord Duncan-Sandys, who

was in his time the holder of nine ministerial offices—all but one as a Cabinet member. It is said of Duncan Sandys, no doubt apocryphally, that he was not the most assiduous attender of his constituency. The story goes that he was once upbraided by a junior member of the local Conservative association, to whom he majestically replied, "Young man, I was elected to represent Streatham at Westminster—not Westminster at Streatham."

I hasten to add that no such charge could be levelled against my immediate predecessor, Sir William Shelton—to whom I willingly pay tribute. Sir William—or Bill Shelton, as he was universally known in Streatham—was Member of Parliament for part or the whole of the Streatham constituency for 22 years. Among the literally thousands of Streatham residents whom I met before and during the general election, I found a deep recognition and appreciation of his work for the constituency. The result of the election in Streatham was a reflection of political and demographical change; it was in no sense a judgment on his record of service. I intend to maintain the high standard set by Bill Shelton during my stewardship of the Streatham constituency.

The constituency, embracing as it does communities in Balham, Brixton, Clapham and Streatham itself, may truly be said to represent the heart of London south of the river. It is a constituency of great variety, ranging from the inner city to the tree-lined streets of the suburbs—pluralist, multi-ethnic, in considerable demographic flux and with a dynamic population full of potential. That potential, I regret to say, is now under great stress and strain.

In the Streatham constituency as a whole, unemployment currently stands at almost twice the national average. The impact of the recession is nowhere better signposted than in the increasingly derelict condition of our major shopping and recreational area—Streatham hill and Streatham high road, once known by Streathamites as the west end of south London. Now, no fewer than 50 of its shops stand empty; a year ago, there were 30. It is a sad irony that the only new building to appear in Streatham high road in recent years is Wentworth house, our local jobcentre.

The recession has torn the heart out of what was once a busy and thriving community. Locally, we are not willing to resign ourselves to inevitable decline. Under the auspices of the Streatham Association, which brings together local traders and of which I am the newly elected president, we shall continue to explore every avenue to bring businesses back to the high road—and especially to the site formerly occupied by the John Lewis company, whose departure was such a tremendous blow to our locality.

Central Government, however, must also accept their responsibilities. Partly as a result of the recession, but for other reasons too, the entire Streatham constituency is increasingly taking on the character of an inner-city area. I therefore give notice that, in this Parliament, I shall be pressing for an extension of the urban programme beyond the present boundary set by Government at the A205 south circular road. The statistics of decline, deprivation and distress warrant such an extension, and that demand unites all political parties in the constituency.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the core of deprivation lies in the Brixton area of the constituency. In our town hall ward, unemployment ranges between 20 and 25 per cent., much of it long term; among young men, the figure is much higher. The Brixton area also ranks high on all the other standard indicators of deprivation—homelessness, poor housing and overcrowding, low incomes and poor health. For too long, we have heard expressions of concern for the condition of the inner city which have been followed up by all too little action.

I am only too well aware of the recent political history of Lambeth council. Lambeth has been easy meat, and doubtless still presents a few choice targets for Ministers; but I believe that the new administration in the borough is making genuine efforts to turn things around. I very much hope that Ministers will recognise that change, and not succumb to the temptation to play political games for short-term political advantage.

The trouble with punishing the politicians is that the people are punished as well. There must be a constructive relationship between central Government and local authorities, and between the public and private sectors, to improve the conditions of the inner city. Central Government now have the chance to signal a new and positive approach.

Last week, Lambeth presented its impressive City Challenge bid. That bid is supported not only by the police and local community organisations, but by major private-sector concerns—BAT Industries plc, P and O Developments Limited, ICL, Higgs and Hill and Laing. In the past few days, Regalian Homes has also lent its support to the bid. Those companies want to do business in Brixton. They have confidence in its future, and they want to work with the local authority. The Government have a unique opportunity to boost the prospects for both enterprise and social improvement in this inner-city area, and I hope that they will grasp that opportunity.

I now turn to the substance of the debate. I must declare my interest as a Member of Parliament sponsored by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers. Efficient transport links are vital to the well-being of an overwhelmingly commuter constituency like Streatham; that such links are not efficient is the daily experience of my constituents and of most Londoners. The CBI has estimated that the London economy loses £1 billion a year as result of the inadequacies of our transport system, and all the current signs are that the position will get worse rather than better.

With what strikes me as staggering complacency, the Department of Transport has forecast that traffic on Britain's roads will increase by between 83 per cent. and 142 per cent. by the year 2025, with London taking its full share. That forecast beggars the imagination: it just cannot be managed. It conjures up a future of super-jams on our roads in an ever more polluted city environment. Clearly, we need a strategy aimed at creating a modern public transport system that will attract car users off the roads.

One part of that strategy, incidentally, must be to add further tube lines to the notoriously sparse underground network in south London. We in Streatham expect to be high on the list, with the extension of the tube line to our area which has been promised by London Transport since 1926. No such strategy exists, however: indeed, there is now a super-jam in the projects that might have formed the beginnings of that strategy. There is no money for Crossrail; Thameslink 2000 has been stopped; the east London line has been stopped; and, to say the least, there is now a major question mark over Olympia and York's Jubilee line.

[Mr. Keith Hill]

So what is on offer to Londoners? The answer appears to be bus deregulation and red routes. In the past six years, bus deregulation has produced a massive drop in the number of bus passengers; that is hardly an encouraging omen for London. While speed and traffic volume are the only criteria for red routes, there is justifiable anxiety about their damaging effect on local businesses, and about their role in splitting up communities and increasing pollution and road accidents.

In Streatham, we are also threatened with the red-routeing of our high road. We believe that a sensible compromise is possible, and I hope that the Department of Transport will be willing to listen to our arguments. We believe, however, that the interests of the neighbourhood must come first.

Speaking candidly, I have little confidence that the proposals foreshadowed in the Bill will assist the plight of rail commuters in my constituency. I seriously doubt whether my constituents can look forward to a 17.10 Virgin service, all stations to Streatham hill, or to a 17.40 Stagecoach service, all stations to Streatham common—much less to the provision of such services in off-peak periods. Moreover, I somehow doubt that Virgin and Stagecoach will be very enthusiastic about laying on less profitable off-peak services on major InterCity routes.

Nevertheless, some method of franchising is to be expected, and it will be necessary to secure proper guarantees in regard to safety, staff training and the retention of through-ticketing facilities. It remains to be seen just how far the Government will succeed with their franchising plans and with their more ambitious scheme for the widespread privatisation of rail services. Neither approach, however, promises to deal with the kernel of the problem—the need in this country to reach the levels of investment in rail services and other forms of public transport that have been maintained over very many years by our partners elsewhere in Europe. Sooner or later, the Government will have to bite the bullet of sustained higher investment in rail.

There is, however, an additional route to increased investment—the route of co-operation between the public and private sector, discussed earlier in the debate but described in detail by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) in his especially important speech on 11 July 1991 in this House, in which he set out a new financial framework for the railways, drawing upon the French experience of co-operation between SNCF and the French banking system. As a trading company in the public sector, there is a special case to be made out for British Rail.

I hope that the Government are still ready to look seriously at those proposals. Throughout my speech, I have tried to argue that partnership between central Government and local government, between the public and the private sector, must act as the motor of economic and social progress. Such partnerships have amply demonstrated their success in other economies and other societies. They ought now to be allowed the scope to succeed also in our country.

6.51 pm

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): Thank you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and giving me the opportunity to address the House for the first time. I congratulate the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) on an exceedingly articulate and fluent maiden speech. I look forward to debating many issues with him in the forthcoming years. I am not sure that I can guarantee how long that will be for him on his side of the House, but it will certainly be for as many years as I can manage on this side.

I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on pronouncing my name correctly. Since I came to the House, everybody has been incredibly kind and helpful, but the one thing that has caused some problems has been the pronunciation of my name. More often than not, I am afraid that the pronunciation has been mistaken for that of the Leader of the Opposition. I am not sure whether that has been an advantage or a disadvantage for me. However, when I told people that I came from Kincardine and Deeside, all was revealed and everybody was happy.

I pay tribute to my immediate predecessor, Nicol Stephen. He was a Member for Parliament for only four or five months, yet during that time I know that his constituents in Kincardine and Deeside very much appreciated the amount of work and effort that he put in on their behalf. I hope that his colleagues will convey his constituents' thanks to him.

It would be wrong of me not to mention his predecessor, Alick Buchanan-Smith, who served this House for 27 years, first as Member for Parliament for North Angus and Mearns and then as the Member of Parliament for Kincardine and Deeside. I know that the respect in which he was held in all parts of the House, by all sides of the political spectrum—in Scotland in particular—and throughout the United Kingdom meant that his sad death last year caused a lot of sorrow and led to a major loss to British politics. I am pleased to be able to pay tribute to his widow, Jan, whom I must thank personally for the tremendous help, assistance, guidance and encouragement that she gave me over the last few months.

Kincardine and Deeside stretches from the south-west corner of Aberdeen city out through the dormitory towns that house many of the employees who work in Aberdeen, associated with either oil, or oil-related industries, and along the most beautiful valley of the River Dee, then on past Banchory, Ballater and Balmoral castle to Braemar and down to the ski slopes of Glenshee. It stretches south from Aberdeen through Stonehaven to the fishing ports of Gourdon and Johnshaven and inland to Laurencekirk and the Mearns where agriculture is the main industry. Kincardine and Deeside is arguably the most beautiful constituency in Britain. I am privileged to stand here today and represent all its electors.

The constituency has benefited significantly from the last years of Conservative government. A measure of that is the recent unemployment figures. Unemployment in Kincardine and Deeside stands at 1,306. In 1987 that figure was 3,289. There has been a drop of 60 per cent. in unemployment. Conservative policies have worked well for the constituency of Kincardine and Deeside. The major industries are oil and oil-related industries, tourism, fishing, agriculture and the small businesses associated with each of those industries. It is appropriate, therefore, that I should be speaking in a debate concerning rail

transport in particular. Communications and transport are of prime importance not just to the north-east of Scotland but to Scotland as a whole.

I concur with some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) regarding rail transport in the north-east. The beginning of Stagecoach's involvement in the service south from Aberdeen is a step in the right direction: to provide the service that the customer wants. We are trying to provide a flexible, targeted service that meets customers' requirements.

I know of two instances where nationalised industries have not worked. Before British Airways was privatised, it ran an air service between Inverness and London. I remember being visited by a senior local manager of British Airways and asked why, as a local business man, I did not use its service. I was told that it was perfectly tailored to the business man: that I could do a fine day's work in London, using British Airways, which timed the aeroplane to leave Inverness at 9.30 am. That meant that one did not reach central London until midday. The return flight left London for Inverness at 5 pm, which meant that one had to leave central London at about 3 pm.

That is not providing a service targeted at the customer. The air route made losses for British Airways, yet, when it was taken over by Dan-Air, it did a marketing job and filled its aeroplanes. Dan-Air now provides a service that leaves Inverness at 6.50 am. One can therefore be in central London by 9.30 am. Furthermore, one does not have to leave central London until 6 pm. That is what I believe bringing private enterprise and private involvement into transport is all about.

Another example has been mentioned—Japanese railways. In my business life, I have been to Japan several times during the last few years. What is commonly known as the bullet train but what is properly called the Shinkansen runs on the main line between Tokyo and Osaka. That train comes into a perfectly clean station, exactly on time, to the second—and I mean to the second. It pulls out, exactly on time, to the second. It pulls up at the platform at a predetermined mark, so one knows exactly where one will be getting into the train.

That is private involvement alongside public involvement in a transport system, yet the competition in Japan is producing a service that is second to none. If, however, British Rail intends to emulate the Japanese, I suggest that it should realise that the one thing that the Shinkansen does not do very well is to provide comfortable seats. Unfortunately, they are tailored more for the Japanese body than for the slightly larger Western frame.

Before ending, it would be wrong and strange if I did not mention the electrification of the line between Edinburgh and Aberdeen. I understand the hon. Member for Gordon being slightly upset about no mention being made of electrification north of Edinburgh. Having been involved in business, I know that such a project cannot be carried out without a proper feasibility study. As the Bill is passing through the House, we should ensure that ScotRail gets on with a feasibility study rather than waiting, as it is, until the study of the line north of Glasgow is completed. What relevance does that have to the line north of Edinburgh? I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport seriously to put pressure on ScotRail to get that feasibility study going, because it wold be an added benefit if it were completed before considering franchising the rail service or involving private enterprise.

The Bill is good for Scotland and for my constituency and I commend it to the House.

7.1 pm

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): The House should know of the excellent productivity standards that the new Minister for Energy has set himself. He caused some consternation last week when he visited the Nottinghamshire coalfield for the first time and decided that he was going to go down two collieries in one day. Given that excellent record, I hope that he witnessed at first-hand the productivity of the Nottinghamshire coalfield.

Last year, six of the Nottinghamshire group's 15 pits produced more than 1 million tonnes, and all set new productivity records. British Coal in Nottinghamshire made a substantial operating profit last year, rumoured to be about £80 million. In addition, 17·2 million tonnes of coal was produced at a cost of £5·26 per man shift in Nottinghamshire. That was a 64 per cent. improvement compared with 1985, when it sold coal at £42·60 a tonne; this year, it is doing so at only £42·93 a tonne. At the same time, electricity prices have risen by 45 per cent. The basic price of coal has remained steady, but the price of electricity has increased by almost half.

The Minister, as a productive man, must recognise those impressive productivity records. One wonders, therefore, why there is a drive to privatisation. The British coal industry is the most productive in Europe. It produces coal at half the cost of the German industry. All over Europe, people think that we are crazy to be closing our collieries.

The Government's policy on the coal industry seems to be driven by dogma and by a belief that private is good and public is bad. What other industrial sector in Britain or Europe can speak of such productivity increases? I hope that the Minister listened carefully to the voices of the coal industry in Nottinghamshire.

Perhaps what is important to the Government is not productivity but opening up the marketplace. In reality, the marketplace in energy has never been as open as it is today. Coal competes with gas, which competes with nuclear and all compete against cheap imported coal. Those associated with the coal industry ask for a level market and a policy by which coal has the same advantages as gas and nuclear.

The plan to privatise the coal industry is an empty prospectus because the reality is that there is nothing to privatise. The industry will have no shape until the pressing problem of the new contracts between British Coal and the generators is resolved. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has a reputation as an interventionist. Now is the time to intervene to maintain a prosperous coal industry in Nottinghamshire and across the country.

In the current year, British Coal will supply 65 million tonnes to the generators. There is a rumour of a new contract for only 25 million tonnes. It is clear that the generators—National Power and PowerGen—want a low-volume, short-term contract. Why, then, can gas generators have contracts for 15 years? The Minister should intervene in the discussions between British Coal and the power generators and argue forcefully for a high-volume, long-term contract. He has the power and the muscle to do so, because 40 per cent. of both

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generators are still owned publicly. He should use that muscle now to facilitate those discussions: unless he does, the hopes that the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) expressed of the work force having a share in the industry will come to nothing. If the contract is short term, low volume, there will be nothing left for the work force to have a stake in. We shall be talking, as the Government's advisers are, of a rump of perhaps 12 collieries throughout the country.

I put some specific questions to the Minister, which I hope that he will be able to answer. Will he continue with the present commitment of no compulsory redundancies in the coal industry? Will he guarantee that those who work in the industry, who have been productive and have turned it around will not be thrown out on their ear, and that there are plans and schemes for a proper reduncancy scheme offering a real commitment to the work force and real pay-offs? Will he ensure that the people who leave the industry do so on agreed terms and are not thrown out compulsorily?

Will the Minister make some pledges on pensions, which are a part of earnings? British Coal's pension fund is perhaps the largest in the United Kingdom. It is a large profitable fund, but most particularly it is in surplus. It has been accumulated by the work force, who are anxious about its future. Will the Minister say today that those assets are the assets of the people who have worked and built them up and that they will not be cherry-picked by some private company?

The Bill has been described as short, but the issues behind it are complex. They deserve careful and considered thought. Issues such as those raised by the hon. Member for Finchley and by my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) deserve consideration. The future of the coal mining industry lies in the balance. It must not be driven by dogma and ideology or by policies that are geared to pride and prejudice and ignorance and arrogance. The Minister must live by the commitment that he made in Nottinghamshire last week that he would consult widely and listen to informed voices in the coal industry. If he does so, he may win few friends, but he will win a great deal of respect.

7.9 pm

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): May I add my congratulations to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your election to office and wish you well for the future. I also congratulate the hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches today, in particular my three hon. Friends the Members for Finchley (Mr. Booth), for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) and for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) who made especially good speeches.

Some hon. Member may not be familiar with an event that took place in the summer of 1989 during the Japanese general election campaign. An Opposition socialist politican found himself on the bullet train—the express train—going directly to Tokyo, but he had to undertake a speaking engagement somewhere along the way. He was very alarmed, so he managed to persuade the driver to stop the train to let him off so that he could fulfil that engagement. The next day, the national press got hold of the story and the politician was forced to resign. The reason for his resignation was not so much that he had behaved in an imperious fashion as that the bullet train was two minutes late. Somehow, I cannot conceive of that happening on the Norwich to London inter-city line.

The latest evidence is that about one in eight of the inter-city trains which pass through Suffolk are more than 10 minutes late. Many thousands of cancelled or delayed appointments and sheer frestration make up that picture. The net result is that a successful and popular bus service has started between my constituency and central London. The journey is cheap and comfortable and, needless to say, that bus service is private.

There is no doubt that, in the 1970s, British Rail, as it was then, was very much production-led. It has moved on and has become more consumer-oriented and sensitive, and management has been forced to be more aware of income and outgoings. However, it is clear that there is still much to be done.

Substantial sums have been invested in British Rail. In my region, the line between Ipswich and Norwich has been electrified and there has been a magnificent reconstruction of Liverpool street station. By the end of the year, the age of the rolling stock in Suffolk will have decreased from an average of more than 20 years to only two years. That pattern of substantial investment is happening all over the country.

However, it is true that no business or service can survive and prosper unless it attracts customers. That is a universal truth, and British Rail must compete with buses and the motor car. There are also other problems and there always will be as long as BR remains a monopoly. That is the central cultural problem of any nationalised industry.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Two Saturdays ago, my wife and young son Frederick, who is five, were travelling home to Suffolk on the train. On the journey, which takes one and a quarter hours, my son became thirsty so they went to the buffet car to ask for a glass of water. No such thing was available but my wife was invited to purchase a bottle of expensive carbonated water. I do not think that any hon. Member or sensible parent would want to indulge his five-year-old son in an early taste for expensive designer fizz. My wife declined to do so.

It is incredible that one can buy an expensive, gourmet, Clement Freud sandwich from the buffet car but not a glass of water—what an extraordinary disincentive to parents who wish to take their young children on rail journeys. It is extraordinary that such a basic provision is unobtainable. I do not wish to criticise the buffet attendant who was merely carrying out orders, but I criticise the overall culture of British Rail. It is not sufficiently user-friendly.

In time, the House will want to consider the proposed detailed structure for our rail services. The formula set out is eminently sensible. I said that BR needs to be market-orientated and customer-driven, but there is still one vital missing ingredient. I have been struck many times by the friendliness and courtesy of BR staff. It cannot be much fun to be a platform guard, a conductor or a ticket inspector when one is always having to apologise so embarrassingly for BR's poor performance.

People are motivated by a variety of reasons. Some want to make a lot of money from employment while others are not interested in that, but there is a common thread among individuals who work for all successful

organisations—pride and motivation. British Rail—the great state monolith—frequently ill-serves its own work force. It lets them down.

Before the Anglia board of British Rail was wound up, it produced a report on privatisation and the future of the railways. It stated:

"BR's workforce is characterised by . . . lack of dynamism. Almost all promotions or new jobs are filled from within with little new blood injected from outside . . . lack of external orientation and preoccupation with internal railway community issues . . . little awareness of market needs or potential defensive attitudes . . . abysmal communication skills both inside the organisation . . . or outside."

It continues:

"At all levels, BR is largely populated with people who are . . . lacking positive attitudes . . . Many BR employees at all levels give the impression of being under siege which in turn gives BR the reputation of being a place to avoid if one is seeking employment."

It concludes:

"The organisation has stagnated at exactly the time that fresh insights were needed to meet the challenge of improved efficiency and market orientation."

No business or public service can thrive with such manpower difficulties.

As we begin to restructure our rail services, let us fill in the one vital missing ingredient—a keen and motivated work force. We have seen how productivity soared in our once moribund car industry. We have seen the effect on British Airways where attitudes were transformed after denationalisation. Rail franchisees will have the opportunity to compete to provide the best, thus spurring on a sense of involvement and commitment in the work force, which will have an infinitely greater chance of being motivated if they have pride in a railway system that is effective, punctual and liked by the British public.

From the vantage point of 10 years hence, I hope that we—passengers and rail employees alike—shall be able to look around at the best railway service in the world. The environmental advantages would be substantial and the advantages for the economy and for the taxpayer would be enormous.

7.18 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): May I first congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. This is the first opportunity I have had to offer you my best wishes, and I am sure that you have the confidence of the whole House. I also congratulate the hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches in this very important debate.

The debate covers two significant businesses—the rail and mining industries—and it is clear that a substantial number of the hon. Members who have spoken have knowledge of those industries. I shall refer specifically to the mining industry in which I worked for many years and about which I know most. The Secretary of State compared the Bill to the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill which paved the way for the privatisation of water and electricity. I served on the Standing Committee that considered that legislation. This Bill is just as pernicious and mischievous, and it is even more dangerous than the paving Bill for the water and electricity industries.

The privatisation of water benefited greatly from the paving Bill. One of the issues that became clear during the debates on paving the way for water privatisation was the shape and way in which privatisation would come about. We knew that there would be 10 water authorities and we knew their boundaries.

Can the Minister tell us how the coal mining industry will be reorganised for privatisation? Is there a set programme? Will it involve the sale of coal or the sale of collieries? If individual collieries are sold, how will that take place? People in the mining industry want to know how the privatisation of the industry will evolve, and what practices and procedures will be followed. We had such information when we talked about the paving procedures for water. I hope that we shall be given some information about how the mining industry will be presented for sale.

My interest is the mining industry, but I will refer briefly to the provisions for the privatisation of rail. I draw attention to the development in West Yorkshire under the auspices of the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority. There is investment, mainly by local authorities, to use British Rail lines and to use the facilities to develop contacts between communities and town centres. The authority is providing stops for some of the villages to link them with the towns of Pontefract, Castleford, Wakefield and Leeds, thus reducing the amount of road traffic needed to take people from the villages into the town and city centres. That is an example of how municipal authorities are developing rail communications in their areas.

I hope that that principle will be upheld and that the service being developed by local authorities will not be withdrawn if private companies consider that the profits —if any—from those links are insufficient for them to be maintained. I hope that the development and planning by the local authorities that form the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority will be maintained and further developed to link the communities with the towns and cities.

Mining is my background. I reflect on the history of the mining industry before and after nationalisation. Nationalisation was introduced because of the working conditions that people in the mining industry had to endure, especially during the war years. There were terrible working conditions and the pay structure could only be described as a system of slave labour. There was a tremendous shortfall of the supplies and supports needed to ensure that people in the industry could work in safety. Not only people connected with the mining industry, but many who supported the Conservative party were concerned about the conditions that miners and their families had to endure and they believed that something must be done about them. That is the basic reason why nationalisation was introduced.

There were tremendous advances as a result of nationalisation. There were improvements in working conditions. There was an improvement in the consultation between the work force and the management. There were improvements in the mining communities with the development of the social welfare programme. Those were all results of nationalisation.

I and people who live and work in the mining communities fear a return to an industry in which profit comes before quality of life. We fear that corners will be cut in safety in the mining industry. I hope that any legislation will include safeguards for the people who work in the industry and for the communities that depend on ming operations.

There used to be 80 or 90 pits in West Yorkshire. We are now down to four and there are question marks over

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two or three of the pits as a result of the Bill. The House should understand the concern that I, my colleagues and those whom we represent in the mining communities have when such legislation is introduced.

I remind the House of the miners' loyalty to the nation for many decades. With the introduction of nationalisation, we secured the five-day week. The miners were immediately asked to work Saturdays to secure greater production. No one can doubt that the loyalty that had been demonstrated throughout the history of the mining industry was shown again when the miners produced the coal that was necessary for the economy. The loyalty and service given by miners in the past should not be forgotten. There is a great deal of suspicion in the mining community because of the way in which the mining industry has been decimated over the past 10 to 13 years.

The miners and their families in West Yorkshire especially and the mining communities in general deserve a better deal. There must be better provisions for protecting the health and safety of the communities in the mining areas. We await with interest the outcome of the negotiations between British Coal and the electricity generators and are watching carefully to see what form the contracts will take. Short-term contracts will not help the mining industry to plan or assist its long-term development. The suggested three-year contract period for the supply of coal to the generating industry is insufficient and will not give the industry an opportunity to plan for the future. At present, 65 million tonnes are supplied annually, and that figure should be maintained. The level of supply to the power stations should be safeguarded. A reduction of 25 million or 30 million tonnes will not do anything to help the mining industry.

I am not asking for the industry to be protected. I am merely reiterating what has been said by the Coalfield Communities Campaign—local authorities that realised the problems that would develop with the closure of pits—which has made it clear that the nation will face problems if we do not strike the right balance in the provision of electricity. If we are to have a long-term contract involving North sea gas reserves being used to generate electricity, we shall have to accept that we may eventually have to depend on Russian gas if the generating industries' demand for gas cannot be met from North sea gas reserves. That could mean electricity consumers paying dearly for their electricity.

The chairman of British Coal recently warned that "short-sighted and uneconomic" decisions on gas generation would rebound on electricity consumers. He said that the dash for gas was not about competition giving lower prices but about competition to secure a market share and that electricity customers would have to foot that bill. Such warnings come not from Labour Members or the miners' representatives but from captains of industry—people who have been appointed by Ministers. They are now telling those same Ministers that we need to examine provision for the generation of electricity, but that gas is not the answer and that coal should be preserved for electricity generation.

The chairman of British Coal, Neil Clarke, went on to say that, at the same time, each gigawatt of gas-fired generating capacity

"will render redundant some of the most modern coal-fired power stations in Europe."

He said that the threat was growing quietly but frighteningly and quickly and that gas could replace more than 40 million tonnes of British Coal's 1992-93 sales of 65 million tonnes to the generators.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy said that he suspected that in 15 years' time gas prices would have risen so high that no stations would be under construction and that the ones now being built would probably be closing down. So Conservative Members are sounding warning notes, telling the Government that their policy on the generation of electricity is both inadequate and wrong.

Much has been said in the past about British Coal Enterprise Ltd. and the money that is being spent to generate jobs and retrain mineworkers who have been made redundant through pit closures and for whom no alternative work is available. In many of the villages where pit closures have taken place, no job opportunities are available. Job opportunities in the pits have been dramatically reduced in our area, but, according to my research, very few opportunities are being afforded to redundant mineworkers. Indeed, in the whole of the West Yorkshire area, which has suffered 14,000 redundancies in the past five to seven years, a maximum of 200 jobs have been created by BCE and its associates, including the Wakefield Pension Trust.

The issues will have to be addressed. We are talking about redundancies and retraining, the future of the mining industry and the nature of the privatisation exercise. We are talking about building up confidence in the communities and in areas where people still depend for their livelihoods on going to the pits. As we have heard nothing today about the practice and principle of the sale of the mining industry, we should vote against the Bill, which does nothing to help the mining industry or, indeed, British Rail.

7.36 pm

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment to the Chair and thank you for calling me to speak in the debate.

As an ex-miner, I propose to talk about the coal industry and to address my remarks not to miners or those who work in the mining industry but to those outside who are aware of the importance of energy. The Minister should take note of the fact that, in a modern society, the top priority of any nation must be an abundance of power for industrial and domestic use. In the United Kingdom, we are extremely fortunate in having oil, gas and coalfields as well as nuclear know-how. In that respect, we are better off by far than many of our industrial rivals, including Germany and Japan.

The trouble is that the Government have a short-sighted attitude to our energy requirements. There is no Government control of the rate of exploitation of North sea gas or oil. The Government take a laissez-faire attitude to the power companies building gas-fired generating units and also to the increased importation of so-called cheap coal, from whatever source.

How long will that continue? The obvious damage to our strategic energy resources in the North sea, the rundown of our coal industry—with massive unemployment and a loss to the nation of skilled miners—and an increasingly severe balance of payments deficit caused by

fuel imports are all the result of short-sighted policies, and the nation is paying a high price merely to retain its present standard of living.

The forecast in the oil export trade is that costs will rise dramatically in the future. Many exporting countries will withdrawn from the world market because of an increase in home demand for coal as their standard of living rises and industrialisation advances. We need only consider Poland and China. Although they have not ceased to export coal, they are finding it very difficult to provide for their markets because of home demand. If there is an increase of 5 per cent. in home demand for energy in third-world countries, the cheap coal available today will disappear more or less overnight.

There is worse to come: it is forecast that freight rates for bulk carriers are to rise. If the cost of replacing existing Panamax bulk carriers is added to the pit head price of coal, the present price advantage will be wiped out. Most of the flag of convenience, third-world crewed bulk carriers are at the end of their working lives. There are no more surplus, moth-balled bulk carriers tied up in fjords or sea lochs to replace them cheaply. Practically all the European shipyards which built bulk carriers have closed or diversified into shipbuilding or North sea activities. It will be a seller's market in future. As a consequence, prices will be high and freight rates are forecast to increase. Those costs will obviously be passed to the customer.

Other costs will increase because exploitation and exploration are forecast in offshore waters, particularly in depths of more than 300 ft. It has been forecast that there will be submersible platforms in the Bering strait. Such exploration is technically possible. BP Alaska has exploited oil reserves in very difficult circumstances, but that was expensive and has an obvious knock-on effect on prices.

Would it not be sensible to control the rate of North sea oil reserves? Would it not be sensible to preserve our natural gas reserves for domestic and industrial markets and not generate short-term electric power which burns massive amounts of our precious gas reserves? Would it not be sensible to retain an indigenous coal industry and the skills of the work force and the mining supply companies, with their export potential to other coal mining and producing countries?

We should to that not just in our name or that of the Government, but in the names of our children and grandchildren before it is too late. Those and many more problems could be handled if the Government gave back to energy its proper priority. The Government should re-establish an Energy Department. The responsibility for energy should not lie with a so-called industrial Department. The Minister said that there is a Minister for Energy, but he is part of the Department of Trade and Industry. Energy does not deserve such a relegation.

Energy is very important, but the Government have relegated it. I believe that they have relegated it because they do not like the Select Committee on Energy, which might ask too many embarrassing questions. If that is not the case, perhaps you can prove it by resurrecting that Select Committee.

Many people would agree with what I have said. I hope that our future generations will be prosperous because we will take care of our resources in this country and elsewhere. We will have to face those energy problems whether or not British Coal is privatised. I hope that you will face them efficiently with the help of all hon. Members because our future is very important.

I do not want to refer at great length to the comments of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who has now left the Chamber. However, he referred to a colliery that is in my constituency. If one of the people who puts up £10,000 to get a job loses that money, I will hold the hon. Member for Gordon responsible because he and others seem to be encouraging that practice. That is not the right way to get a job in the mining industry. The hon. Member for Gordon is playing political football with that colliery and the people in Midlothian cannot afford to pursue that course of action.

I hope that I will not upset anyone, but the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson), in his maiden speech, said that the mining industry can learn lessons from the North sea industry. I believe that the reverse is the case. The regulations in the coal mining industry are far better than the regulations for the North sea industry. Similarly, Her Majesty's inspectorate in the coal industry is better than that in the North sea. Recognition of trade unions is also better in the coal industry than in the North sea. Victimisation in the coal industry is not as bad as it is in the North sea.

I believe that the North sea industry can learn a great deal from the coal mining industry. However, the industry in the North sea has learnt that we sometimes have to have a disaster before legislation is changed. We should not have to pay that price. The Piper Alpha disaster was one too many. Similarly, any disaster in the mining industry is one too many. We are concerned that safety standards might be watered down if there is privatisation.

Having made my maiden speech, I have waited patiently for some time today to make my second speech. I believe that the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill is an appendage to the privatisation of the coal industry. The coal industry is a major and important industry. If it is handled properly, it has the potential to supply energy and be more important than gas and oil in future. You have the responsibility of the nation's future in respect of the coal industry in your hands. I hope that you will act accordingly because we will be watching very closely how the privatisation develops. I hope that it will be carried out sensibly.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) has just made his second speech in this House. In future, when referring to right hon. and hon. Members, he should not use the word "you", because he refers to me when he uses that word.

7.46 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): It is an honour to follow so many brilliant maiden speakers from both sides of the House. I particularly enjoyed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) who demonstrated so eloquently that the Conservative party in Scotland is alive and kicking, making gains and doing very well indeed.

I support this paving Bill. It is hard to understand why any hon. Member should not support it in the Lobby. It is an important measure which ensures that the pledge given

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during the general election in the Conservative party manifesto for the privatisation of the railway and mining systems are carried through in the most sensible way possible. The Bill is necessary so that preliminary work can be carried out and the right method of privatisation can be assessed and discovered.

The Bill is clearly a logical continuation of the privatisation programme which the Government have been pursuing for 11 years. We have seen its obvious success in many other industries. We have seen the success for workers in those industries, for the customers and for the shareholders. It is right that those successes and opportunities should be extended to rail and coal.

I welcome rail privatisation, the guiding star for which should be benefit for the customer of a better railway service. We should try to achieve the environmental gains that we want to make. We should see more freight traffic on the railways instead of on the roads. I hope that the railway network will be expanded. I am certain that that expansion will take place only in the private sector, and I look forward to reading in due course about the Government's plans for how that privatisation will take place.

I must apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the House for having to slip out at one point during the debate. Unfortunately, I missed the speech of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping), with whom I share a common boundary. I apologise to him. However, I have ascertained what he said and I am sure that he made many points with which I would agree. I know that he will not mind my saying that in a coal debate, we on this side of the House miss the presence of Andy Stewart. That is no criticism of the hon. Gentleman's speech. No coal debate in the past was complete without Andy Stewart's wise words. He was a staunch advocate of the coal industry not only in Nottinghamshire but elsewhere. My hon. Friend the Minister is in some ways fortunate that he is not here. His knowledge of the coal industry was unrivalled in the House and he always made an immense contribution.

In spite of the comments from Opposition Members, my hon. Friend the Minister is very much the Minister for Energy and for coal. His visit to Nottinghamshire last week was widely welcomed and appreciated. At the weekend I spoke to some of the people he met. They particularly appreciated his visiting the area so early in his time as the Minister for coal. I am grateful to him for that and I hope that he will visit often. Unfortunately, there is no longer a colliery in my constituency. Sadly, Gedling colliery closed at the tail end of last year. However, my hon. Friend's visits to Nottinghamshire must be in our interest, and we look forward to seeing him there many times in future.

The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) once again referred to the performance of British Coal Enterprise Ltd. He does it and its work a disservice by belittling it. There is a lot more than it could do. The hon. Gentleman and I are on common ground on that point. But it is important to place on the record that £70 million has been provided for projects which have attracted almost £500 million of private sector funding. British Coal Enterprise has helped 3,600 former miners into new jobs in the past year alone. In total, 70,000 new job opportunities have been created nationwide. Some 39,000 of those are in 3,200 businesses supported with loans or equity investments from British Coal Enterprise.

I want to place it on the record that we should not belittle the achievements of British Coal Enterprise. We should encourage it. Those who have an interest in the coal industry should seek to expand the work that it undertakes.

Mr. O'Brien: I appreciate the opportunity to intervene. I have been requesting information from British Coal Enterprise on how many jobs have been created in my constituency or throughout the Wakefield area. No way can I obtain that information. My research shows that, after 14,000 redundancies, if 200 jobs have been created, that is the maximum. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that that is value for money? Is that acceptable? Can he tell me how many jobs have been created by British Coal Enterprise in his constituency?

Mr. Mitchell: I have placed on the record what I believe to be the figures for what British Coal Enterprise has achieved. My hon. Friend the Minister will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said about the difficulties of accessing full information and I am sure that he will help with that. Clearly, some aspects of British Coal Enterprise are commercially confidential, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the figures that he requested should be available. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will ensure that we have them.

One of the most important points that we can make this evening is that privatisation of itself will be a mere detail for the future of the coal industry. The size of the coal industry will be affected most by the size of the contracts awarded by the generators. In terms of the size of the industry, privatisation is at the margins compared with contracts. I believe that privatisation will be in the interests of the coal industry as it goes forward into the future. But I emphasise that the conclusion of those contractual negotiations will determine the size of the coal industry.

My hon. Friend the Minister will have learnt during his visit last week that there is immense anxiety in the coalfield about the future shape and size of the industry. That is not surprising. In Nottinghamshire, the local economy receives £5 million per week in wages from the coal industry. The industry is a huge employer. These days the average age of miners who go down the pit is 34 or 35 —about my age. They are highly paid with family commitments and mortgages. They are worried about the future of the industry.

I am the first person to say that the ability of the Government to influence the size of the coal industry is severely limited. The great threats to coal come in many shapes and sizes. There is the huge threat of what has been described as the dash for gas. Gas threatens to replace 20 million tonnes of coal. I have grave reservations about the dash for gas. Gas-fired generation has security of supply implications. The regulator will have to look with great care at the price charged to the consumer for gas-produced electricity commissioned by the regional electricity companies. If he sees that gas-produced electricity is more expensive than that produced by coal, he will wish to act in the interests of the consumer.

Policies on emissions are another threat to coal. Both the Government and Opposition Front-Bench teams have agreed that we should bring forward our target of

returning emissions to 1990 levels from 2005 to 2000. That may well represent the environmental priorities of our society, but it is a gloomy factor for the deep-mined coal industry to absorb and negotiate.

There is also the threat of a carbon tax, about which loud noises were made abroad last week. I appreciate that it is conditional on others agreeing to it. That fact alone will delay its implementation significantly, but it is hardly a help to the coal industry in its current difficulties.

Then there is the threat from imports. I should make it clear that I have no objection in principle to imports, but I have some objections on commercial grounds. That is why I voted against the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill. Strategically it would be most unwise for the generators to rely intensively on imports of coal. Long-term forecasts of coal prices have been notoriously inaccurate in recent years and invariably wrong. Rather than looking to imports as the great solution to the problems of electricity generation, the generators should look at the progress that has already been made on price and quality by the indigenous producers. In particular, they should look at the amazing achievements in productivity, especially in Nottinghamshire.

First, the coal industry has made progress on price. The figures are staggering. The electricity industry is proud that price increases for the electricity consumer have been less than the rate of inflation. There has been a 44 per cent. money increase over seven years, but that is less than the rate of inflation. Over the same seven years, effectively there has been a complete standstill in the price of coal. The price of coal has increased by approximately 20p per tonne in the past seven years. By any stretch of the imagination, that is an enormously impressive performance.

The Nottinghamshire collieries made a profit last year of £80 million. Every pit is currently in profit. I submit that that is a significant factor. The coal industry has made staggering productivity gains: 479 tonnes per man shift in 1979; 1,357 tonnes per man shift in 1991. The improvement in the quality of service to generators has been immense. During last year, the industry agreed to dispatch 10,000 trainloads of coal to the generators. Every train asked for was delivered. It is against that background that the generating companies are deciding how much coal to contract for. I urge them to think carefully whether there has not already been such a transformation in the coal industry that they should consider how best to structure their contracts and what future they want for British coal.

As you know better than almost all of us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, once closed a colliery cannot be reopened. We have the great advantage of this huge natural national asset. I hope the generators will consider that carefully as they seek to reach a conclusion to their contractual negotiations.

The coal industry is a modernised industry. Further gains on efficiency and productivity can be made. I am sure that the generators will bear that in mind when they decide on the contract size and the nature of those contracts. The current three-year bullet arrangement is not satisfactory. I am sure that they will want to seek a more sensible process which allows for much longer contracts than are currently allowed at present.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's arguments. Does he not agree that his arguments are probably the best ones for keeping the coal industry in state hands? The benefits that can now accrue from the coal industry should go to the state and should not be handed over to private enterprise.

Mr. Mitchell: I do not agree. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber at the beginning of my speech, but I strongly support the privatisation of British Coal and the Bill, because it will ensure that the Minister and his colleagues are able to arrive at the right shape for privatisation.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley Central): The hon. Gentleman said that he agrees that once a colliery is closed it cannot be reopened. How does he square that with the Government's statement, in response to the Energy Select Committee, that they do not accept that principle? The Government believe that once a colliery has been closed, it can be reopened.

Mr. Mitchell: I do not think that I have said anything with which the Government would disagree. Once a colliery is closed it is extremely difficult to reopen. It would be exceedingly hard for anyone to disagree if they considered the cost and the nature of such reopening.

I am seeking to argue that those contracts determine the size of the industry and not privatisation.

Finally, in Nottinghamshire, we are looking to the Minister for an exceptionally good deal for the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and for the Nottinghamshire coalfield, which comprises 12 operational pits, with 11,000 men working them. I have given details of the tremendous productivity that has been achieved. They are highly paid and highly skilled men, working in a profitable, productive and successful part of the industry.

Would the Minister give a commitment that, when formulating his plans for privatisation, he will consult extensively with the UDM, and will have an open-door policy to its leader and his advisers, who have shown in recent months that they are prepared to accept the principle of privatisation and to work in the best interests of those they represent?

When the Minister formulates his plans, the 1982 privatisation of the National Freight Corporation may be a helpful example to him. There are a number of pointers there. I hope that he will accept the sheer quality of management in Nottinghamshire and of the UDM, which has shown its commitment to the progress that he is seeking to make by appointing the financial advisers I mentioned.

I also hope that the Minister will accept that we should be looking for a mining company based on the Nottinghamshire coalfield, with perhaps the addition of Dawmill colliery for geographical reasons. I hope that he will feel that that option for the privatisation of British Coal is worthy of consideration, and that he will look seriously at it.

I hope that the Minister will be able to give assurances tonight to the many pensioners of the coal industry. A huge number live in the area that I represent. We need such assurances so that some of the more scary stories which have been disseminated can be laid to rest.

Nottinghamshire will do well out of the contracts when they are issued and it will deserve to do well. The country owes a debt of honour to the Nottinghamshire miners. It is now absurd to suggest that miners could hold the

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country to ransom, but that was the case not so long ago. At that time, the UDM stood firm against a style of union militancy which has thankfully now gone.

The UDM has shown that it is a modern, forward-looking trade union. It has earned a massive share of the privatisation for its members. When the Minister sums up, I hope that he will offer to the men of the UDM, whom I represent, the opportunity to share in the privatisation and, once the contracts have been issued, the opportunity of a stable future for the industry—an industry in which they may be able to grow old, rather than continually looking for alternative employment or for work in another colliery.

8.3 pm

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): First, I must congratulate you, Madam Speaker, as this is my first opportunity to do so.

Like hon. Members on both sides of the House, I have reservations about the Bill. It is ambiguous and the arguments about its constitutional impact are also correct. The Bill should have been preceded by certain actions, and that applies particularly to the coal industry. For example, it seems that coal contracts should have been dealt with before the Bill came before the House because they will determine the size of the coal industry.

We seem to be in the difficult position of discussing a Bill that paves the way for privatisation of an industry when we do not know what size the industry will be. We should therefore have had information on those coal contracts. I hoped that the Minister would intervene to ensure that the generators took sizeable contracts to secure a high-volume coal industry. At this late stage, as it appears that there has not been intervention, I hope that the Minister will use his influence to make sure that the coal contracts will ensure a high volume deep-coal mining industry.

When discussing coal contracts, one must bear in mind the amount of coal produced by opencast mining. In 1991-92, almost 18 million tonnes were produced from opencast. That takes a sizeable slice from deep-mined output. Therefore, the Minister must consider that seriously when looking to the future of those contracts.

The Minister must also accept that the contracts need to be of a reasonable duration. We are probably talking in terms of five or six-year contracts to ensure that the coal mining industry has the confidence for investment and continuity.

Another action that should have been taken, alongside negotiations for coal contracts, was an immediate moratorium on pit closures. I do not understand how we can talk about a Bill to formulate the size of the coal industry, a Bill which will be introduced some time in the autumn, when there will be many colliery closures in the meantime. One colliery in Yorkshire is already facing closure. It is important for the Minister to consider a moratorium and I hope that it is not too late for him to use his influence to do so.

The Minister should also use his influence to limit imports of coal, bearing in mind that much of the coal coming into Europe is from countries that are dumping coal on the European market at costs below those of production. The Minister must consider that.

The burning of orimulsion is another matter that should have been considered before the Bill came before the House. It is a dirty fuel. The Minister should have taken action and I hope that it is not too late for him to use his influence to ban it.

The Minister should bear in mind the cost of gas-fired power stations. Perhaps he can confirm that 40 combined gas cycle power stations are in the pipeline and are likely to be on stream by 1996-97. I understand that that number of power stations is likely to produce about 15,000 MW, which would displace an enormous amount of coal. One thousand megawatts equals 3 million tonnes of coal and, as a rule of thumb, the mining of 1 million tonnes of coal employs 1,000 miners. If it is true that 15,000 MW of gas-fired electricity will be on stream by 1996-97, we are talking about the displacement of 45 million tonnes of coal, and the loss of 45,000 jobs. The Minister should also bear that in mind. I hope that he will use his influence to ensure that the cost criterion is applied when we consider gas-fired power stations.

On the subject of nuclear power stations, Conservative Members have mentioned subsidies and their disadvantages. I hope that the House is aware that we subsidise nuclear power and that each of us pays 11 per cent. more on our electricity bills to subsidise that industry. That annual subsidy runs at between £1·2 billion and £1·6 billion. That is ironic because if that subsidy were paid to the mining industry, it would be able to give its coal free to the generators and still make a profit. However, we are using such a subsidy to support an inefficient source of electricity generation—the nuclear industry.

The coal industry in Britain must be maintained at a reasonable size, a size that will sustain employment in the industry and the mining communities, and ensure that we are able to provide the needs of electricity generation. If we do not take such steps, we will be totally dependent on imported energy sources, which will lead to a considerable increase in the balance of payments deficit—by, perhaps, £3 billion a year. It will also lead to an alarming expansion in opencast mining. In some reports, it has been suggested that opencast mining may expand to account for up to 25 million tonnes of production. That would mean that, every time we turned a corner in our constituencies, we would be likely to see a great opencast mine. In addition, as has been explained, the dash for gas also presents great problems.

We must consider the cost of privatisation. Conservative Members have spoken of the great benefits of privatisation and how it helps to generate wealth. Let us consider the costs of privatising the coal industry. The Government have been closely associated with N. M. Rothschild, which has produced two reports. The first suggested that the liabilities—current and historic—may cost the Government up to £6 billion. At the same time as paying for those liabilities, the Government will be faced with the industry's considerable continuing debt, possibly in excess of £500 million.

That means that we will have to pay out an enormous amount before we even consider what revenue will be generated by the sale of the industry. Again, the Bill is totally ambigious on that point. Without having some idea of the industry's eventual size, we will be unable to evaluate the amount of revenue that may result from its sale. The Rothschild report appears to suggest that the revenue obtained from the sale may be less than £2 billion,

yet we will have to pay out more than £6 billion in liabilities. Perhaps the Minister will confirm that, because the costs of privatisation are likely to be enormous.

Other factors that must be considered—they were raised by the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth)—are safety standards in the industry. It was pleasing to hear him pay a compliment to the mining unions, which have fought tirelessly to ensure that people injured in mining receive reasonable compensation. At the same time, the unions have used their endeavours to ensure that, as a result of section 123 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954, the workmen's inspectors have done much to reduce greatly the accident levels in the industry.

That work was so good that, between 1970 and 1972, Lord Robens, as a result of his experience in the mining industry, took cognisance of the fact that it had kept the number of accidents low by virtue of the involvement of the men in the mines. His report, in 1972, became the basis for the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974, which extended to workers in factories and other establishments the same opportunity to help to eliminate hazards from the shop floor.

I hope that the Minister will take note of the way in which the mineworkers unions, with the help of section 123 of the Mines and Quarries Act, have been able to work with their safety inspectors to reduce accidents. I hope that he will ensure that the same standards will apply in a private coal sector, should that come about, so that accident rates do not increase.

It is alarming to compare the current accident rate in the private mining sector—there are roughly 160 private collieries in Britain—with that in the public sector. I hope that the Minister will confirm that the accident rate in the deep-mining private sector is eight times higher than that in the public sector. That statistic causes Labour Members great concern. We hope that the Minister will make a great endeavour to ensure that the legislation is applied in such a way that we are able to maintain high safety standards in the private sector. The recent accident in a private mine in Nova Scotia in Canada showed that any deviation from high standards is likely to result in a horrific accident. Therefore, it is essential that safety in mines is the Minister's paramount objective.

I also hope that the Minister will consider closely an industrial relations formula for application in the future mining industry—by that, I mean a formula which is similar to that in section 46 of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946. That imposed upon the industry conciliation and negotiation procedures which embraced the whole industry from national to local level. I hope that the Minister will consider similar industrial relations procedures for the future industry, because they ended much of the bitterness that the industry inherited at the end of the war. From 1947 until today, there have been only three national strikes in the coal mining industry, and that shows that the conciliation procedures brought about good industrial relations. I hope that the Minister will consider implementing similar conciliation procedures in whatever private mining sector comes about.

I hope also that the Minister will consider establishing consultation arrangements alongside the conciliation procedures so that we can exploit the great experience of the work force so that their ideas can be used to make the industry more efficient. Since the war, since particularly 1974, £12 billion has been invested in the industry and the consultation procedures were used to harness the ideas of the men to make the industry much more efficient. That shows the great benefit of having consultation procedures which allow the men to participate with management in achieving the objectives of high productivity and harmonious relationships.

I hope that the Minister will consider my points and perhaps confirm whether he will consider such conciliation and consultation procedures for whatever future industry emerges from the future proposals. The industrial relations structure is one of the most important that he must bear in mind.

8.19 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I add to those of other hon. Members my congratulations on your appointment, which gives many of us great pleasure?

I know that many of my constituents will be interested in the Bill and particularly in that part that deals with British Rail, because it is the first course before the main Bill that the Government will bring before the House later in the year, and that will be of special interest to my constituents. My constituency has one of the largest commuting populations into London. People travel to Liverpool Street station, from where they go to work both in the west end and in the City.

Unfortunately, all too often, my constituents have suffered because, until 15 years ago, East Anglia was an economic backwater before the improvements and developments in the local economy. That meant that the area was the last in line for investment in, for example, new rolling stock. Until relatively recently, other parts of Network SouthEast passed on old rolling stock, which worked until it collapsed and finished its natural working life. That caused a great deal of resentment and many uncomfortable journeys.

The problems with which my constituents have to cope—they are not necessarily unique to the Chelmsford-Liverpool Street line—include unpunctual services, a lack of information about delays and cancellations of trains and a lack of basic cleanliness. A number of years ago, many of my constituents were never sure whether it was night or day because the windows were so appallingly dirty.

To be fair, in the past two or three years there have been notable improvements and great strides forward in improving services on the line. There has been a great deal of investment, as is manifest by the complete rebuilding of Chelmsford station and the magnificent redevelopment of Liverpool Street station. Only the most churlish of individuals could have anything but high praise for that, although there was a price to pay in that, for a number of years, there was total chaos in rush hours.

There has been new rolling stock on the line, and the beginning of resignalling from Liverpool Street through to Chelmsford and up to Colchester. Thanks to investment by British Rail, this will go to the Shenfield-to-Chelmsford part of the line by 1996. That will improve the ability of the network to meet timetables and be punctual. All that is to be welcomed.

However, all too often, because there was no genuine commercial pressure on Network SouthEast, too many problems have arisen that one would not have expected in the private sector. For example, three years ago, for five days over Easter, the whole of Liverpool Street station was

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closed, quite justifiably, because British Rail was beginning the resignalling of the line at that narrow entrance into Liverpool Street from which the lines fan out into the station. When the line was reopened on the Tuesday after Easter, there was chaos, because the new points system kept on short-circuiting.

When the system was being developed, nobody had considered the implications of having overhead electric cables, so when the network was started up to deal with the commuter services, the overhead electric cables shorted the new equipment. It took British Rail three days to identify the cause of the problem, and it then had to go to York to get some Marconi equipment, then bring it down and use it to get the system working. That caused the maximum amount of trouble to the commuting population, not only in my constituency but in the rest of south Essex. However, getting compensation from British Rail for the disruption and loss of services was like getting blood out of a stone.

By the bye, my constituents warmly welcome the charter being introduced to help provide commuters and customers of British Rail with help when there is a breakdown in services and they do not reach the expected standards.

The 45-odd years of British Rail as a nationalised industry has led to it becoming almost immune to the demands and wishes of its customers. It has a captive audience for the commuter service it provides in the south-east. There is no genuine competition because, realistically, people cannot travel from Chelmsford by car or bus. There are private bus services that work, but the journey is longer and one has to get up earlier and is longer on the road getting in, so the service is not in genuine competition with British Rail. Therefore, it can provide the standard of service that it wishes to provide without having to pay undue attention to the demands and complaints of its customers.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Drivel.

Mr. Burns: The hon. Gentleman is probably fortunate in that, for most of his working life, he has not had to be a commuter and travel from Chelmsford or on the Fenchurch Street line from Southend, Billericay or any other parts of south Essex. He is unaware of what commuters there have to put up with day after day. Far too often, it is an unacceptable service.

Mr. Snape: I am glad to say I am not and never have been an Essex man. The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that I spent most of my working life in railway signal boxes. I have never heard so much uninformed drivel about the industry in which I spent all my working life. If it was a private firm—I think it was Marconi, but I am speaking from memory—that installed the signalling system at Liverpool Street that the hon. Gentleman described as having failed because of the problems with immunisation of the overhead electric line, why do not he and his constituents seek compensation from that private company, or is that a bit too simple for him?

Mr. Burns: I am sorry to say that the hon. Gentleman is falling into a rather large elephant trap. It was not Marconi that installed the equipment, it was Westinghouse. As I said, Marconi's equipment from York, three days later, bailed out the faulty system. If the hon. Gentleman had had the courtesy to listen at the beginning of my speech, he would not have made that mistake. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has made a fool of himself by trying to score cheap party political points.

If the view that the hon. Gentleman has just expressed is symptomatic of the Labour party's view of commuters in south Essex, then it is no wonder that, in general election after general election, the Labour party does so abysmally in places such as Chelmsford.

Mr. Snape: I have no desire to drag this argument on, but I did say that I was speaking from memory when I said that it was Marconi.

Mr. Burns: The hon. Gentleman's memory was faulty.

Mr. Snape: Of course it was faulty. Occasionally, even the hon. Gentleman gets it wrong, as he is now. If it was Westinghouse that installed the signalling equipment, will the hon. Gentleman accept that that is not in the public sector either?

Mr. Burns: I accept that it is not in the public sector. I was making the point that it was British Rail, or Network SouthEast, that was placing the contracts for the equipment to upgrade the service. It seems staggering that, before the equipment was installed, it did not pay special attention to ensuring that it would work so that, when the rail network was brought up again on the Tuesday after Easter, it too would work to the full satisfaction of British Rail and commuters. The hon. Gentleman should stop making accusations. He has made an abysmal fool of himself by revealing that he did not know the company that provided the faulty equipment at Liverpool street station. I can understand him trying to save face, but I advise him to stop digging. The more he digs, the deeper the hole becomes.

I was about to say, before being so rudely interrupted by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), that for over 40 years British Rail faced no competitive forces. It had no competition to ensure that it kept itself in shape and sought to improve the quality of the service that it was providing to its customers. The commuter network provides a service for an almost entirely captive market, and in the absence of competition, it could afford to become soft and not to meet the standards that any decent provider of a service would wish to meet. It did not have the stimulus of competition to ensure that it met the needs, wishes and desires of its customers.

Commuters could not turn to another form of transportation to enable them to get to and from their work each day. As a result, the rail system continued to degenerate. Increasing apathy determined the standard of service that BR was prepared to accept for its customers. In the past few years, however, BR began to realise that the writing was on the wall and that, sooner or later, it would have to face the full force of competition. We have seen Network SouthEast seeking to improve the service that it provides. Anyone who uses the service to Liverpool Street from Chelmsford will accept, I am sure, that there have been many improvements in the past few years.

The process has not, however, gone far enough. It is still not what most people would consider a first-rate service, despite the fact that, since 1983, BR has invested £4 billion throughout the rail network.

The hon. Member for Kingston on Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) talked about subsidy, but to increase a subsidy year in and year out is not the right way to go forward. That approach provides a cushion but not an impetus to improve the service. I believe strongly that investment in the rail network is crucial to give BR the ability to improve its service and meet its customers' demands. The answer does not lie in flabby subsidies that provide a cushion.

I welcome the fact that the Government are prepared to allow the privatisation of British Rail, albeit in stages. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends look forward to the small detail of the Government proposals as they are brought forward. I know that my constituents will welcome any initiative that introduces a dose of competition and the flair of private enterprise, to ensure that the service that is provided by the rail network is brought up to standard so that those who use it get value for money and a clean and punctual service. That will ensure that their use of the system is more enjoyable as they of necessity travel to and from work. I know that, when subsequent legislation is introduced, my constituents will warmly welcome it. They will recognise that it will improve the level and standard of a service that they have had to tolerate for far too long.

8.35 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): I am sure that the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) will forgive me if I do not take up his remarks about British Rail. I shall confine my remarks to British Coal and the Bill to privatise the coal industry, but I have considerable misgivings about debating a paving Bill which, in effect, will give an enormous number of powers and duties to British Coal, as well as placing upon it liabilities without hon. Members knowing how the industry is to be privatised. We have no idea of what is to be the structure or size of a privatised industry. The Government should have published their proposals before they asked us to debate this paving measure. We are faced with an abuse of the House.

I agree strongly with the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) about the provisions that will allow the Secretary of State to bypass Parliament when introducing measures that are necessary to privatise British Coal and British Rail. It is unfortunate that the Select Committees are not yet in place. It is especially regrettable that we do not have a Select Committee to scrutinise energy matters. Sadly, we are to lose the Select Committee on Energy, which in the past produced reports on the coal industry.

My misgivings stem from the fact that I do not believe that the coal industry should be privatised. I do not see privatisation doing any good for the industry. Indeed, I do not see it bringing any benefits. The Secretary of State mentioned some of the benefits that he thought that privatisation would bring to the mining industry, such as increases in revenue, the widening of share ownership and increased capital. How can revenue be increased when, as my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) rightly said, British Coal has billions of pounds worth of liabilities? It has been said already that it is the institutions and other large organisations that purchase shares. Individuals are not buying shares in privatised industries. Ownership is passing more and more to large companies and other large organisations.

We must concentrate on the market that is available to the coal industry and the market that will be available to it in future. Against that background, privatisation is not the appropriate policy for the industry when we consider our energy requirements. It will do no good to put the industry at the mercy of the market. The generators have said that they want gas-fired generation—combined cycle generation—and not British coal. They have said more than once that they want to use imported coal. My right hon. and hon. Friends have said that the generators, beginning with the Central Electricity Generating Board, have stated that they want to import up to about 30 million tonnes of coal. They have said also that they are interested in burning orimulsion. Again, that will take markets from British Coal. We must remember that our stocks of coal are as high as about 42 million tonnes.

What are the prospects for gas-fired generation? We were told last year by the chairman of British Coal that 7 to 7·5 GW of generation was due to come on stream in 1994-95. That generation will displace about 20 million tonnes of British coal. If we take that from the current level of 65 million tonnes in the contracts, that leaves an available market of about 45 million tonnes.

British Coal could compete with combined cycle gas if we took into account the capital costs of building those stations. The only valid argument for burning gas, which is a premium fuel, is that it is cleaner. We must also consider the Government's commitment to flue gas desulphurisation. I remember the former Secretary of State for Energy giving the Select Committee a commitment that flue gas desulphurisation equipment would be fitted to the power stations at Drax and Ferrybridge. We are still waiting for much of that equipment.

Very cheap coal stocks are available on the international market from South Africa and elsewhere and British Coal has difficulty competing with such low-priced imported coal. The generators say they will buy and import coal from whatever sources they want. Both National Power and PowerGen have said that many times. How much coal will be imported? How many tonnes will be taken out of the available market of 45 million tonnes? We need answers to those questions before we can judge any privatisation proposals for the coal industry.

Opencast mining, which produced 18 million tonnes of coal last year, also takes away markets from British Coal. We must think about the environmental aspects. It is no use saying that because opencast mining is cheap, because it is good for profits and because it can be mined easily, we should move towards that system of mining. It is a filthy operation. It produces dust and filth, means many lorries on the road and creates many environmental problems. We should restrict, not increase, opencast mining.

Privatisation will compound the coal industry's problems. The hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) referred to a carbon tax and the problems of emissions. Again, those problems will restrict the coal industry's markets. Before we begin to discuss privatisation, how that is to be achieved, or even the safeguards that Labour Members want, we need answers to many questions. Many of the threats to British Coal should be lifted.

We have spoken many times about the increases in productivity in the mining industry—more than 100 per cent. since 1985. In addition, costs have decreased by up to 25 per cent. and prices by about 28 per cent. since the last time that British Coal increased prices in 1985. If prices

[Mr. Eric Illsley]

can be brought down under public ownership, why do we need to privatise the industry to try to force prices down even further? How far down will prices be forced while we are paying money hand over fist to the nuclear industry? I do not understand how privatisation will improve the coal industry's record.

Coal is competing with gas, but, as I said earlier, it can be cheaper. Coal also competes with nuclear power, yet there is a £1·2 billion fossil fuel levy, equivalent to 11 per cent. of each of our electricity bills. It has been said many times that if coal had that sort of protection, British Coal could give it away. It could even pay the generators £10 a tonne for taking it and still come out with a profit.

British Coal is also competing with coal from South Africa, which pays low wages, and with coal from Colombia, which uses child labour. The competition is unfair. Privatising the industry will not deal with the problems in the market. It will not produce increased competition within the industry that will benefit Britain or its energy market.

By the time we discuss the details of a Bill that will put the flesh on the bones of this measure, it is probable that only a handful of collieries will be left. Already British Coal is embarking on a further pit closure programme. Perhaps there should be a moratorium on pit closures while we decide what size coal industry we want.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is not the Government's policy that threatens the industry, but the other aspects to which he referred? Does he further agree that it is not privatisation, of itself, that places the industry under threat, but factors that are outside the Government's remit?

Mr. Illsley: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will remember that a former Secretary of State for Energy, Cecil Parkinson, told the generators that they could buy coal from wherever they wished. That was Government policy. The coal industry faces many threats, and privatisation is one. It will affect the size of the industry because it will mean further pit closures. Although I agree with the hon. Gentleman that many of the threats to the industry are not the result of the Government's policies, nevertheless the Government have done little to remove those threats, to encourage the industry or to protect it at a certain size. During the time that I served on the Select Committee, I heard little from the Government about safeguarding the industry at a certain size.

I am not sure who would want to buy into the coal industry. The hon. Gentleman referred to the coal contracts that are still being negotiated. Who would want to buy into an industry that has no long-term future? Nobody knows how many collieries will be left this year or next year, what size of market will be available next year, how the contracts are progressing or what tonnage British Coal will be able to produce. Only the companies involved in the energy market, such as the large oil companies and the international coal companies, might be interested in buying into the handful of British collieries that will remain once the industry is privatised.

There is also the question of the £6 billion of liabilities. Who will take on responsibility for that? In particular, I want to know about the liability for concessionary coal to retired members of the industry. Hundreds of thousands of people still receive concessionary fuel because they served in the industry. Will the Government have responsibility for that or will it be hived off to some agency? The Bill contains the power for British Coal to transfer liabilities. Will it transfer the liability for concessionary coal to some agency, to the Government or to someone else? How can we find out about the future for coal concessionaires?

What about the liability for compensation cases, especially industrial deafness? Many cases become apparent only many years into the future. Who will have the responsibility for meeting the compensation claims both of the past and of the future?

Who will be responsible for meeting claims against the privatised industry for coal mining subsidence? Only a year ago the House passed an Act dealing with coal mining subsidence, but there was no provision in it for a privatised industry.

The coal industry pension funds have already been mentioned. British Coal is taking a £450 million pension fund holiday. It is immoral that the workers in the industry are still required to pay into that scheme even though British Coal is taking a holiday and accepting hundreds of millions of pounds towards its profitability. Is the pension scheme to serve as an incentive to anyone buying into the privatised industry? Is the scheme to be hived off, sold or transferred to another agency? What will happen to our members' pensions in future? We do not want a repeat of the Maxwell scenario, with people lobbying Members of Parliament day after day because their pensions have been misused.

Although the Bill is only a technical measure, it raises a number of questions, which have been left unanswered. There is no Select Committee ready to scrutinise the Bill, and we shall have to await the Government's proposals, having already given British Coal power to get on with transferring its liabilities and assets in the move towards privatisation. It is imperative that the Government publish their proposals very quickly.

8.50 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I join right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House in congratulating you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your new post. Your active participation in crime prevention, as a member of the Select Committee on Home Affairs—on which you served admirably for many years—will serve you well in your years in the Chair. I only hope that I will not be one of those whom you regularly slap down for disorderly conduct.

I am greatly concerned about the Bill's deliberately misleading contents, which set out to con the electorate in the coalfield communities of Britain that the Government are in favour of a coal mining industry. It is clear that the Bill will bring to an end the coal mining industry as we have known it for generations.

The Bill implies that only small reductions will be made in the scale of the industry, but no one is fooled by that. Anyone who knows anything about the industry is aware that it has already suffered a series of devastating cutbacks, and the Bill will only serve to erode it substantially further.

The industry's management is employed to protect the industry, produce coal and look after the mining communities. Over the past few years, however, I have seen very weak management, whose only intention is to

run down the industry. The present management of British Coal and the Government are acting together deliberately to reduce a sizeable public asset.

I ask the Minister to consider imposing a moratorium on any further cutbacks or closures, until the Bill is enacted. If he does not do so, he will be making an enormous mistake. On the stock exchange, trading in a particular company is usually suspended once an offer for it has been made, and there can be no sense in the Government allowing the coal industry—whose management will be making a bid for it—to be run down by its management to the point where it will then be affordable to them, so that they can make a fast buck out of privatisation. A number of my hon. Friends intimated that the scale of the industry's mismanagement is known throughout the coalfields of Britain.

Most of Nottinghamshire's coal miners are in their early thirties, whereas in the past they would be in their early sixties. Only a few years ago, there were 34,000 coal miners in Nottinghamshire, but today the number is 12,000. Coal mining remains vital to Nottinghamshire, providing £5 million a week, or one quarter of a billion pounds a year, in wages alone. We cannot allow a privatisation that will lead to further pit closures, so that the number of Nottinghamshire mines is reduced to three or four. That would be a tragedy for all concerned.

Although most of Nottinghamshire's miners are young, some of them have previously worked in Yorkshire, Scotland, Lancashire or the north-east. Many of them married young and live in council houses or those that were originally owned by the Coal Board but are now largely in the hands of housing associations. Privatisation will not offer anything of a chance to those miners, as some Conservative Members suggested.

The hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) said that the Bill offers miners a great opportunity to participate in and own part of their industry. The question is not whether the Bill is an exercise in share ownership in a dwindling industry, but whether a coal mining industry will remain in Britain. I suggest to right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House that if privatisation proceeds, there will be no industry.

A number of my hon. Friends asked questions about undertakings that must be given before the Government proceed. My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) spoke of the problems created by subsidence. They are known to me, because I endeavoured to defeat them during the lifetime of the previous Parliament, together with other hon. Friends—including my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who battled valiantly in respect of that issue.

I have still to discover where all the moneys have gone that were deducted by British Coal from every tonne of coal produced, to be set aside for subsidence compensation. Three or four years ago, I asked a former Secretary of State for Energy the total value of those funds, and was told that it was more than £200 million. There is no way that any substantial sums have been paid out, so what will happen to that £200 million or £300 million if the industry is privatised? Does the Treasury guarantee that those moneys will be paid out to future generations? I suspect not. I suspect that, by means of regulation, the Government will stand aside from the problem and leave home owners facing a dilemma.

The question of pensions has rightly been highlighted. I do not trust British Coal's management now, and I trust a privatised coal industry even less. Only a few weeks ago, rather than voting for extra help for coal industry pensioners, the management voted for an extra week's holiday for its senior members. Such action prompts immense distrust in those who must examine the management of public industries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) mentioned people who rely on the industry for concessionary coal. What will happen to people who live in houses where coal is burned? What about those who have moved out of such houses or have had electric or gas fires installed, and who therefore rely on payments? I know—and the Government know damn well—that the privatised companies will not pay allowances to all those people, or provide guarantees to that effect.

The industry is well aware, as are Members of Parliament who represent mining communities, that British Coal's present management will not say, "Here we have a man who used to work in the industry," or "Here we have the widow of a miner"—perhaps one who was killed while doing his job—"who is in a terrible state, cannot walk properly and cannot attend to the fire, and who therefore wants to switch to a different fuel," and decide to help that person. No leeway will be found.

I ask the Government to stop misleading the British people and to stop trying to repeat the exercise of the early 1980s, when they said to the mining industry, "Trust us: stand with the Conservative party. We will look after you—there is a future for coal." We have seen the "future for coal". It means a total rundown of the industry, the closure of hundreds of pits and the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs, directly in mining and indirectly in the subsidiary industries.

If the Bill proceeds, there will be no future for the mining industry. It is about time that the Government came clean and started to admit to the malicious damage that they are attempting to inflict on the coalfield communities.

9.1 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I welcome the opportunity to support the Bill, especially because it allows me to share with the House some thoughts about my constituency, Basildon. I know that the House is particularly keen to hear about my constituency: it is impossible to have too much of a good thing, and Basildon is a very good thing.

During the general election campaign, Opposition Members tried to make transport—and the Fenchurch Street line—an election issue. I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) in his place, because he visited Basildon during the campaign; we saw a very nice photograph of him looking out of a carriage window. Let me wish him well in his bid for the deputy leadership of the Labour party. If I had a vote, I should certainly support him: to me he represents the authentic voice of socialism, along with the hon. Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). We do not want any more of this designer socialism!

During the election campaign, the leader of one of the rail unions also came to Basildon, where he addressed a crowd of 200. I think that his advice was as follows: "In a

[Mr. David Amess]

marginal constituency like Basildon, blame the rotten service on the Conservative party. Vote against the hon. Member for Basildon; vote for the Labour candidate." Neither possibility came true as a result of the efforts of Opposition Members.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Whom does the hon. Gentleman blame for what he and I agree is a clapped-out railway system between Fenchurch street and Southend? Does he blame British Rail, the Government or the Archangel Gabriel?

Mr. Amess: I am delighted that two Essex Members are present tonight. Let me make it clear that I blame the disgraceful service on the line.

Just nine months ago, I telephoned the chairman of British Rail after the first disastrous public relations exercise in my constituency. The gentleman who is supposed to manage the line was to meet me at Basildon railway station, but he never turned up. He never turned up because he missed his connecting train. I came to my office in the House of Commons, telephoned the chairman of British Rail and invited him to share the journey with me from Basildon to Fenchurch street. His office told me to meet the chairman of British Rail in time to catch the 8.26 am. train. There was no 8.26 am. train. It should have been 8.36 am. Then we found that two out of the eight carriages were locked. After that, the shambolic journey took place.

When we eventually arrived at Fenchurch Street station, we were met by Sir Bernard Braine, the former Member of Parliament for Castle Point. I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink), who succeeded Sir Bernard Braine, is in his place. Of course, Sir Bernard exploded when he met the chairman of British Rail. He was unable to participate in the journey because he was given the wrong time for his connecting train at Benfleet.

The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) asked me who I blame. I jolly well do not blame the Government. That is what Opposition Members tried to do during the general election campaign. When I stood with my megaphone during those three weeks outside Pitsea, Laindon and Basildon stations, I found that the good people of Basildon were not blaming the Government. They were not fooled by the Opposition's promises. I see that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has disappeared. That is a pity. I know that the general public were not fooled at all. Sadly, the management of the Fenchurch Street line is somewhat lacking.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Is my hon. Friend aware that in a parliamentary answer last week, the Minister informed me that British Rail, headed by Sir Bob Reid, who must take final responsibility, had still not come forward with its proposals for rolling stock investment on the Fenchurch Street line? Until British Rail comes forward with those proposals so that the Government can consider them, I do not see how Opposition Members can possibly blame the Government. Does my hon. Friend join me in calling upon British Rail to make its proposals as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Amess: I am delighted to join my hon. Friend in that call. Everything that he said was absolutely right.

The Fenchurch Street line is very poorly managed. How else can one explain the fact that, when our constituents arrive at Fenchurch Street station, they are given a postcard with eight excuses? There is a box next to each excuse. Each box has to be ticked according to the particular flavour of the day. Employees are expected to hand that postcard to their employers to explain why they were 10, 15 or 20 minutes late. The service is an absolute disgrace.

Mr. Meale: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that I and many of my hon. Friends received a similar postcard through our letter boxes from the vice-chairman and chairman of the Conservative party asking for money in the weeks before the general election?

Mr. Amess: I think that that is a red herring. However, during the election campaign, I received a letter from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) asking my wife and me to subscribe to the party political activities of the Labour party, so I think that that is 15-all.

The management of the Fenchurch Street line is somewhat lacking. We on these Benches believe in strong leadership. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Yes, we do, and we expect strong leadership from the chairman of British Rail. I make no criticism of the women and men who work so hard on our railway stations and who do a very good job. No wonder morale is low. It is the bosses who need to raise their heads above the parapet and take responsibility for rail services.

I know that time is pressing, so I gently say to our excellent ministerial team that we would have liked slightly tougher targets in the citizens charter for the Fenchurch Street line. If British Rail cannot deliver an adequate service, it is about time someone else was given the opportunity to see whether they can do better.

I pay tribute to the Basildon commuter group, led by Mr. Martin Ramms. It does an excellent job, but its members have better things to do with their time than holding committee meetings and doing the job of the management of British Rail. My constituents are fed up with the Fenchurch Street line. They will no longer put up with the shoddy service they get. I believe that this excellent Bill is the answer, and I have no doubt that, as a result, the Fenchurch Street line will improve in the months and years ahead.

9.10 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): May I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker—no doubt for the umpteenth time—on your appointment? I hope that you have a happy time in the Chair and keep us in order, as you would like people to keep their dogs in order. I hope that you will treat us better than some people treat their dogs.

We heard five maiden speeches, most of which were made by Conservative Members. The first was made by the new hon. Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat). He was formerly the Member for Aberdeen, South and he got to Harwich via the circuitous route of an unfortunate brush with the electors of Roxburgh and Berwickshire. That makes him what is called a retread. If the contents of his speech were anything to go by, it sounds as though the retread process has not reduced the friction that he used to induce between himself and Opposition Members.

Everyone would accept that the new hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) has a hard act to follow, particularly as he is denied the use of the famous handbag. He seemed to subscribe to the policies of his predecessor. Labour Members at least welcome his warning to Ministers about the need to maintain safety in Britain's mines, even if they are to be privatised.

The next maiden speaker was my good and old hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill). He is a welcome addition to the House, particularly as he is the first non-Tory representative for Streatham since 1912. There must be some lessons there. He made a fluent speech and recited the story of Duncan Sandys' arrogant relationship with the electors of Streatham. I was once told by Nicholas Ridley that Duncan Sandys had a habit of running down the majorities that he inherited from other people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Streatham referred to the outfit called Stagecoach. My view is that much of the railway privatisation will owe rather more to Dick Turpin than to the stagecoach.

I thought that I might have some difficulty with the new hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson), because he displaced my good friend and member of my team, Frank Doran. But he paid Frank a most gracious tribute in his fluent speech, and we are all grateful to him for that.

The new hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) made a confident, noteless speech, expounding the virtues of his beautiful constituency. Labour Members who have made hapless visits there in by-elections will at least confirm its beauty. He paid tribute to his short-term predecessor, Nicol Stephen, and, rightly, to his predecessor but one, Alick Buchanan-Smith, who was a genuine, decent Tory gent—a species which, regrettably, is increasingly absent from the Conservative Benches. Nevertheless, his successor is welcome here.

The Bill paves the way for the privatisation of the British Coal Corporation, and before it is drowned in a sea of pro-privatisation propaganda, it is as well to remember the basic facts about British Coal. The 49 colleries run by this publicly owned company are the most efficient in Europe. Britain's 41,000 miners produce coal at a much lower cost than any of their European competitors, but, unlike their competitors, they receive no production subsidy.

Equally, important, Britain's mines are twice as safe as any in the world. No other industry in Britain is twice as efficient and twice as safe as its German counterpart, yet this British industry is in rapid decline and is in danger of being reduced to as few as a dozen pits, not as a result of any shortcomings in the industry but because it is already paying a double price for privatisation—first, as a consequence of the privatisation of its major customer, the electricity industry, and secondly, because of the Government's process of preparation for the privatisation of British Coal itself.

Britain's miners and their families in the coalfield communities know that it is make or break time for the coal industry, but they are not asking for any special favours. They believe that a secure future for what remains of the coal industry would be good not only for them but for Britain, and I am sure that they are right.

If we do not maintain a substantial supply of deep-mined British coal, everyone in Britain will suffer. No serious Government could contemplate the alternatives. Let us consider the inevitable consequences of the alternative ways of making up for the coal that would no longer be produced. First, there is the dash for gas, burning our precious natural gas supplies in power stations. That will prematurely run down our limited gas supplies, drive up the price of gas, add to the trade deficit and, ultimately, make Britain dependent on gas imports from insecure foreign suppliers—all that to generate electricity which will cost more than electricity generated from existing coal-fired power stations.

A second option is to import more coal. Ten years ago, Britain imported only 4 million tonnes, but last year it was 20 million tonnes and rising. If that continues, coal imports alone could add as much as £1·5 billion to Britain's annual trade deficit, a self-inflicted wound which must hamper our economic performance.

Another option is yet more opencast mining, on top of the massive increase of recent years. It is a system under which coal is cheap because the price is paid by the communities bordering the opencast workings.

A major option being pursued by the Government is nuclear power, which is being kept alive by endless injections of public subsidies. Every electricity user pays a surcharge to cover the cost of nuclear power which is used whenever or wherever it is generated, while coal-fired plants which produce cheaper electricity are forced to stand idle and are threatened with closure. All these policies are being pursued now as part of the privatised electricity companies' efforts to drive down their short-term costs, whatever the long-term consequences. Needless to say, those cost reductions have not been passed on in any way to the consumers of electricity.

The coal industry needs long-term, high-take contracts with the generating companies. It needs them now and it needs them whoever owns the coal industry. Such strategic decisions are the stuff of government and the Government should be involved in the negotiations—even Rothschild, the Government's own merchant banker advisers, recommended that. But the previous Secretary of State for Energy, John Wakeham, chose to ignore Rothschild's advice.

Responsibility for the coal industry now rests with el Presidente, the new President of the Board of Trade. That is appropriate in some ways because the energy industry, besides producing almost one fifth of our country's wealth, has a major impact on our trade. The rundown of our coal industry could add to the trade deficit by massive increases in coal and natural gas imports. The British mining equipment industry would lose export orders if it were denied a home market in which products could be demonstrated to potential overseas buyers. British power plant manufacturers will also lose markets if they are held back by a lack of investment in modern clean coal technology. Instead of exporting, we should end up importing to meet our own needs.

The President of the Board of Trade must take the matter seriously. In 1989—I assume that he was referring to the Tory party—he said:

> "I beg our party not to argue that a trade deficit on overseas trade is of incidental importance, self-correcting, easily financed. I don't believe a word of it."

He was right then and we are right now. He should act now to avoid these gratuitous additions to the trade deficit.

The new President of the Board of Trade has said that he believes in intervention. He has his chance. He should get on and intervene, and work to achieve the long-term

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

high-take contracts which are the only way in which to provide a secure future for British Coal. The latest reports of the talks between the two generating companies and British Coal suggest that they are miles apart and that the two generators have no intention, unless there is Government intervention, of making offers that would offer a decent future for the coal industry.

The President of the Board of Trade also proclaims his European credentials. He has a chance to do something about that as well. The European Community imports about 120 million tonnes of coal a year and the President of the Board of Trade, if he is serious, should press our partners to give Britain the opportunity to supply some of that market and thus enhance the Community's drive for reduced dependence on fuels imported from outside member states. If he does that, he is likely to get a sympathetic response from the Commission and from our European partners because they cannot believe their eyes when they see the British Government closing down Europe's most efficient coal mines.

The President of the Board of Trade should also work within Europe to get a greater European Community contribution to the development of clean coal technology—which has been neglected under this Government—not only for the sake of the British coal industry. It is important for British plant manufactures as well. Coal-burning power stations will be built around the world. It is vital for everyone to ensure that those power stations use clean coal technology to reduce chimney emissions and to improve efficiency. If Britain does not invest in that newest technology, British plant manufacturers are bound to lose out to their German, Swedish and American competitors. The President of the Board of Trade should act now to help British Coal and British plant manufacturers gain a better future. All those considerations apply whether the coal industry remains publicly owned or whether it is privatised.

I now turn to the question of the sell-off. Coal privatisation, as the new hon. Member for Finchley made clear, is a Thatcherite hangover. Like the poll tax, it is a triumph of Tory prejudice over common sense and the interests of the taxpayer. The Bill paves the way for that privatisation.

The Bill permits British Coal to start spending money on the process of privatisation. That is just the next instalment of Tory outdoor relief for the financial classes in the City. What they lose on Canary Wharf, they will want to make up for in privatisation fees. The merchant bankers, accountants, estate agents, brokers, underwriters and lawyers are all out there, jostling, grunting and squealing, waiting to get their noses back into the privatisation trough. The track record of the Tories and their friends in these matters is appalling: whole industries have been sold off at knockdown prices.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: What do the hon. Gentleman and his party have to say to the miners at Monktonhall, who are each prepared to put up £10,000 of their own money to become shareholders in a mine that used to be owned by British Coal but was shut by it? Is the hon. Gentleman in favour of their doing that? Does he support them, or would he ignore them or treat them with contempt?

Mr. Dobson: My own view is that the salvation of Monktonhall lies in an arrangement with the rest of the coal industry in Scotland.

Mr. Bruce: Come on.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman asked me a question; perhaps he will do me the favour of listening to my reply. The salvation of the Monktonhall and Frances collieries lies in an all-Scottish arrangement that gives a future to the whole of the Scottish coal industry and not just to some peculiar arrangement at Monktonhall.

Whole nationalised industries have been sold off by the Government at knockdown prices. When Harold Macmillan said that the Tories were selling the family silver, I do not think that he had the full flavour of their failure to get value for money. The Tories have usually obtained the sort of price for the family silver that Bill Sykes used to get from Fagin, and for broadly speaking the same reasons.

With coal privatisation, the robbery of the taxpayer is already under way. Coal is following the three classic stages of privatisation—write-off, sell-off and rip-off. The process began when the Government used their powers under the Coal Industry Act 1990 to write off more than £6,000 million of the industry's debts. The coal industry restructuring fund is set to gobble up a further £3 billion of taxpayers' money to fund redundancy payments. About £8 billion worth of expenditure has happened already or cannot be avoided, but as much as £3 billion of taxpayers' money could still be saved if the coal industry is run down no further. All that money is being spent to make what is left of British Coal sufficiently attractive to foreign mining companies. As usual with Tory privatisations, the taxpayer picks up the bill for the liabilities, while the new owners make off with the assets.

The Tories have some strange ideas about public subsidies. They seem to object to even the smallest public subsidy to maintain coal production, but apparently will pay any price to ensure that production is reduced. The total contribution by the taxpayer to the rundown of the coal industry and its privatisation could well total more than £11 billion—equal to £500 for every family in the land—yet according to Rothchilds' advice to the Government, at any given level of output, an extra 10 million tonnes of coal could be produced at an additional cost of just £30 million.

Most people are upset when taxpayers' money is used to persuade farmers not to grow crops, but the present situation is worse. A farmer who stops growing a crop in a field can cultivate that field again and so produce more crops. But the coal from a colliery that has closed can never be produced; it is lost for ever.

If we want another example of Tory spending priorities—compared with expenditure on giving a decent future to the coal industry—we need look no further than the public sector contributions to the Canary Wharf scandal. Since the President of the Board of Trade first established enterprise zones and docklands development corporations when he was Secretary of State for the Environment, no less than £353 million of taxpayers' money has gone into the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, and a large proportion of that will have been to the benefit of the developers of Canary Wharf. I find it hard to believe that there is anyone in Britain who thinks that that money has been better

spent than it would have been on providing 10 or a dozen years' worth of extra production of 10 million tonnes for the British coal industry.

Aside from the cost, there is also the matter of how the Government will privatise the industry. Coal is very unlikely to be put on sale like the electricity and gas industries. Nothing is certain, but it is likely to be sold as one or more going concerns to other companies, probably international mining companies or conglomerates with mining interests. Will it be sold as a whole or in distinct geographical blocks, such as, for example, two large companies, each covering Yorkshire and the midlands and smaller companies in Scotland, Wales and the north-east?

What will be sold? Do the Government intend to hand over Britain's coal reserves in perpetuity to foreign mining concerns? Or will they keep public ownership of the reserves and license the companies to operate as with oil and gas in the North sea? Will they sell opencast mines with deep mines? If so, will the Government reverse their recent relaxations in planning controls? The environmental record of private opencast companies is far worse than the environmental record of British Coal. When the President of the Board of Trade visited north Warwickshire during the general election, when he was Secretary of State for the Environment, he promised some revision of those planning controls.

Will the Government offer miners free shares in the companies? Will they urge miners to invest their savings in shares? If so, the miners would do well to remember that if they put their savings into their own pit and the pit closes for reasons beyond their influence or control, the miners would be likely to lose their jobs and their savings.

In the end, will coal privatisation be good for Britain? That must be the test and it is the test which a year or two ago the current President of the Board of Trade said should be applied to all takeovers. He said:

"The bidder would be required to show that the takeover would have positive benefits in a wider national interest."

That test should surely apply to the takeover of British Coal.

We believe that the privatisation fails that test and we know that the preparations for privatisation have already hammered the coalfield communities and thrown thousands of miners out of work. That brings me back to the miners. The proudest achievement of the British coal industry is its safety record. That record is already under pressure as a result of new working practices. It is further threatened by the spineless acceptance by the Health and Safety Executive of proposals from British Coal that seem likely to make matters worse. In addition, the previous Parliament repealed the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908 which limited the hours worked underground.

Despite those setbacks, British Coal's safety record remains second to none. In terms of serious injuries per man shift, over the years it has proved twice as safe as private mines in Britain. It is twice as safe to be employed by British Coal down one of its mines as it is to be employed by a private contractor down the same mine. The level of accidents down German mines is twice as high as in Britain. The record is five times worse in the United States. In South Africa, Russia and China the safety record is anything between 10 and 50 times as bad.

That is the proud record for the British coal industry. It would be shameful for the Government to propose any change that threatens safety. However, privatisation raises that spectre. The most likely purchasers of British Coal are international mining companies which, quite frankly, are used to trading the safety of their work forces in exchange for cheaper output. Every one of those international mining companies has a far worse safety record than British Coal.

Let me give an example of what those international mining companies get up to. Before it was bought by Hanson, Peabody Coal in the United States systematically rigged the dust recorders down its mines. It was prosecuted and settled for a fine of half a million dollars. It is clear that if that company were involved, privatisation of British Coal would put the safety of British miners at risk. The same applies to all the other companies.

I am sure that I speak for all my right hon. and hon. Friends when I say that, much as we object to coal privatisation because of the cost to the taxpayer, the cost to the balance of trade and the cost to our fuel reserves, our deepest objection to coal privatisation springs from our fears for the safety of the miners. Whatever else happens, the cost of privatisation must not be borne by the body and blood of the British miner.

9.35 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): The House accepts that the Bill is a simple and straightforward measure. It confers on British Coal and British Rail powers to do things required to pave the way for privatisation. As was accepted by all the hon. Members on both sides of the House who have spoken today, it is largely a technical Bill. The majority of speakers made the point that it is an important first step towards our manifesto proposals for the coal and rail industries.

It will be important to the success of the privatisation discussions that British Coal and British Rail are able to consider and take advice on our proposals, advise the Government on the proposals that we introduce and draw up plans for implementing the privatisation proposals.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) made a trenchant criticism of the structure of the Bill. We are simply following the precedent that has been followed in other privatisation measures. I listened carefully to his point about advertising and will look at it in some detail, but he must accept that the precedent has been well established. We shall introduce a Bill to privatise British Coal and a separate Bill to privatise British Rail. Those Bills will be introduced later in the Session.

When the substantive coal and rail Bills are introduced, we shall undoubtedly have a chance to debate, I suspect at some length, many of the issues that hon. Members have raised.

Mr. Alan Williams: Is the Minister aware that the precedent is one ill-conceived Bill in 1988? Does he accept that he is giving the industries the power to do and to spend that which is currently outside their statutory powers in pursuit of his wishes, when he does not even have statutory authority for the things that he requires them to do? That is a constitutional obscenity.

Mr. Eggar: I think that the right hon. Gentleman is technically incorrect in terms of when the advertising expenditure was incurred. That expenditure was not incurred until after the main privatisation Bill had gone through the House. On his point about a constitutional

[Mr. Eggar]

outrage, I must remind him that, much as it may irk him, the commitments to coal and rail privatisation were clearly in our manifesto. He must take account of that.

Most of the debate has been about the coal industry. I hope that the House will understand that I therefore wish to concentrate my remarks on coal, as did the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

Listening to the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) drew me back to my first days in the House when I took part in the coal debates in the 1979 Parliament and listened to his predecessor, Alex Eadie, who put much the same sort of gloss on his speeches. I look forward to continuing my discussions with the hon. Gentleman, much as Alex Eadie had his discussions with me.

We have benefited from some effective maiden speeches during the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) was the first maiden speaker to get to his feet. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said that he had a "hard act" to follow. I would go further and say that he has the hardest act to follow, but he started powerfully and, if not explicitly, compared his forthright contribution to the diffidence shown by his predecessor, saying that she waited for about two years to make her maiden speech. He made some powerful remarks about the need to ensure employee ownership in the mining industry and I can assure him that we have that very much in mind.

The hon. Member for Finchley was followed on the Conservative side by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson). Having listened to him, I share his confidence that it will be a long time before other hon. Members are able to join the exclusive club of ex-Members for Aberdeen, South to which he referred. He made some interesting comments about the read-across from the oil and gas licensing regime to the coal industry, and I shall certainly want to consider them.

The hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) then made a contribution. I understand that he paid an appropriate tribute to his predecessor, Bill Shelton, who was a well-liked Member of the House. London Members in particular will miss his presence.

The hon. Member for Streatham referred to the record of Lambeth council. I listened to—dare I say it—his pleading for his colleagues in the Labour party who are running Lambeth. Understanding will be given if it is earned. I noticed the importance that he attached to Lambeth's city challenge bid. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends will give that appropriate consideration.

Then my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) made his maiden contribution.

Mr. Foulkes: Get on with it.

Mr. Eggar: It is appropriate to pay a tribute to maiden speakers, and I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman's criticism.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside referred to his immediate predecessor and to Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith, who was Minister of State at the Department of Energy for a considerable time. He is quite right; Alick was admired and loved on both sides of the House and was a good representative of his constituency. Like the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, I admired his fluency, for he apparently spoke without any notes.

We were then able to welcome back my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat), who has lost none of his fire, zest and belief in privatisation. We also heard a contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley). I am told that no debate on railways could take place without him. He made many thoughtful remarks about the railways. The paving Bill allows British Rail to analyse and get advice on many of the different matters that he raised.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who is not in his place, mentioned Edinburgh Waverley station. He will be able to read tomorrow that no decisions have yet been taken on that. It is still too early to say which stations might be sold and when.

The Government's aim is to secure the largest economic coal industry that the market can support. As many hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) and the hon. Members for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) and for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) pointed out, significant contributions have already been made by the coal industry in recent years, in terms of increasing productivity and reducing costs.

British Coal has an impressive record of both technical and professional excellence. That was made clear to me during my double-shift appearance in the Nottinghamshire coalfield when I visited Ollerton and Rufford pits. I got a clear message from everybody that I met during that visit of their total commitment—whatever job they held in British Coal—to the improvements that have taken place in British Coal in recent years and of the way that they were looking forward positively and realistically to the challenges that lie ahead.

It is clear to me that the future of British Coal rests with privatisation. That is the way in which British Coal can best sustain and reinforce the achievements of recent years and, indeed, go on to even greater things. That is the way in which we can really ensure that the deep-coal mines of this country are able to compete and produce coal at competitive world prices.

Mr. Redmond: I remind the Minister that the Conservative party did not gain an overall majority in the percentage of the vote in the election, so there is no mandate for privatisation from the majority of people in this country. Will he institute prosecutions against British Coal for failing to maintain the required percentage of disabled people employed within the industry? British Coal is not keeping to the letter of the law, so will he seek advice about prosecuting it for failing to maintain that percentage of registered disabled people?

Mr. Eggar: I shall certainly consider that point. My memory is that there is an indicative guidance as to the employment of disabled people rather than a legal requirement. None the less, the hon. Gentleman has raised a serious point, which I shall consider and I shall ensure that British Coal's attention is drawn to it.

The hon. Members for Sherwood and for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) spoke about the need to consult on the structure and timing of coal privatisation. I can tell the House that, tomorrow, I will write to all the bodies that are directly involved in the coal industry to seek their views on those issues. I shall also

welcome views on coal privatisation from any other intrerested parties or individuals by 22 June. That will enable me to consider carefully the points that they make, together with a number of the points expressed during the debate, before decisions on the form and timing of privatisation are taken.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling asked for "open doors" for the UDM. I met Roy Lynk at Rutford colliery last Wednesday. I told him that I was available to hear his members' views—I meant it—and I will, of course, listen carefully to what he says.

My visit to Nottinghamshire brought home to me how very much the nation owes to the miners of Nottinghamshire. The Government are aware of the major contribution that they made to the welfare of the country, which is something that we shall not forget.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras rightly and understandably ended his speech by concentrating on safety in the mining industry. I shall write tomorrow to the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission, Sir John Cullen, to seek the commission's advice on the safety implications of coal privatisation. The Government are determined that existing high standards of health and safety will be maintained. Those standards should be based on comprehensive regulation, frequent and thorough inspections by the HSE mines inspectors and, as with any industry, the vigilance of the work force and management. These features of a safety regime in a privatised industry will ensure that the health and safety of mine workers remains a constant and paramount objective.

The future privatised coal industry must continue to be mindful of the health and safety implications of any technical or operational innovations. Innovations designed to improve productivity and reduce costs will be essential for the future of the United Kingdom coal industry. These improvements will be achieved while at the same time maintaining and improving safety standards. During my visit to Rufford pit last week, I was particularly struck by the care that is put into the planning and design of mine development so as to ensure that the most modern and efficient technology can be safely introduced, in a way that is appropriate to the geological conditions of the coal reserve concerned.

The hon. Members for Holborn and St. Pancras and for Barnsley, West and Penistone referred to the accident rate in private licensed mines. That rate has shown a marked improvement and I am told that it is now comparable to British Coal's excellent record.

Mr. Dobson: A substantial number of people connected with the mining industry believe that the system of continuous supervision of safety minute to minute by deputies who can stop the job even in the face of the management is crucial to the maintenance of safety. Will the Minister guarantee that that system will continue if the mines are privatised?

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Gentleman knows, under our system that is the responsibility of the Health and Safety Executive. If he had been listening, he would have heard me saying that I shall write to Sir John Cullen asking for his advice on the implications for safety of privatisation of the coal mines. We shall look at that advice carefully. I yield to no one in my concern for the maintenance of the high safety standards of the British coal mining industry. The hon. Member for Sherwood will know of the elaborate precautions taken in the introduction of safety measures in the Rufford colliery as it moves to new techniques in mining. We should all respect that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling and the hon. Members for Sherwood and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) all, rightly and understandably, expressed concern about, and drew attention to, the importance of coal contracts, both long term and otherwise, and the negotiations that are going on between the generators and British Coal. The negotiations are a commercial matter between the parties concerned, although, as the House will expect, I have been taking a close interest in them. It is very much in the interests of all concerned that there should be the earliest possible resolution of these negotiations, so that the uncertainties facing the parties can be brought to an end. That was the message that I got firmly from the miners and managers of the Nottinghamshire coalfield during my visit there.

Mr. William O'Brien: The Minister referred to our comments about the long-term contracts. However, I also mentioned the dash for gas, concern about which was expressed in messages sent by the chairman of British Coal and by the Tory chairman of the Energy Select Committee. Will the hon. Gentleman say something about that?

Mr. Eggar: Hon. Members on both sides of the House commented on that, and clearly it is important that any developments of independent generation of gas are economically competitive. There are many—I am one of them—who believe that coal, especially that produced from a privatised industry that uses modern methods and adopts the right co-operative approach with the work force, will be able effectively to compete with gas and, in many instances, undercut gas prices. We shall ensure that we have a coal market of the critical size and coal that is priced at a level that can undercut gas only if we establish a really productive coal industry.

I wish quickly to deal with other matters raised by several hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is understandable that they should have concentrated their remarks on pensions, an issue that affects hundreds of thousands of pensioners directly and many other people who in various ways rely on the money that is brought into the community by British Coal pensions. Some of the rumours that are being played back to me after running round the coalfield areas would, in different circumstances, give me much cause for concern. In every privatisation, however, the Government have been sensitive to pensioners' concerns. I wish to make it clear that the Government will ensure that the pension entitlements of existing contributors and of past employees of the industry are properly safeguarded.

Several hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Wentworth and for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), talked about concessionary fuel allowances or cash in lieu. We shall ensure that existing entitlement earned as a result of service for British Coal will be safeguarded. Privatisation of the industry will therefore not affect the concessionary fuel benefits of former employees and their eligible dependants.

This has been a thoughtful and instructive debate in which Members on both sides of the House have voiced the concerns of their constituents. They have addressed the issues that affect British Rail and British Coal that are of

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especial concern to their constituents. The contributions of those who have experience in the mining industry have highlighted the issues for me and brought home the features of the debate that will be of importance over the coming months.

The hon. Member for Sherwood asked me to listen. I can assure him and the House that I shall be doing a great deal of listening over the coming weeks and months. We shall be discussing a difficult issue that will affect the future of miners, of communities near pits and the competitiveness of British industry in terms of the generating costs of electricity, which affects the ability in time of our electricity, gas and coal industries to export and import in a free market with the rest of Europe.

I have been asked about clean coal technology, which is one of the matters to which hon. Members will turn their attention in future. We recognise the importance of the development of clean coal technology and we shall be giving consideration to the future of British Coal's research in the context of privatisation.

I welcome the fact that the House has approached the important issues surrounding the privatisation of two great industries in such a serious fashion. I believe that the debate has helped to identify the key issues that need to be considered for the future of the industries.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: The Minister has not said whether the Government are prepared to reconsider the licensing responsibility for British Coal. Does he accept that it should be referred to the Crown?

Mr. Eggar: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. The point that he and a number of my hon. Friends made will be considered. I understand their concern.

This has been a good and constructive debate and it has set the tone for the debate on privatisation. I urge hon. Members to vote for the Bill.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 325, Noes 256.

Division No. 15] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*

Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nicholas
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, James
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Hepple, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoff
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
MacDonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*

Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Harold *(Don' C)*
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

10.14 pm

Madam Speaker: The Question is——

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will the Leader of the House make the necessary arrangements for a statement to be made on the implications of the coroner's court's decision on the friendly fire death issue today? This matter has aroused considerable concern within the House and elsewhere. The legal implications and the concern over the almost unparalleled decision of unlawful killing requires that a statement be made at the earliest opportunity. Therefore, I ask you to require the Leader of the House to make the necessary arrangements in order that that can be achieved.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of the deep concern that undoubtedly exists over the unlawful killing of the service man in question, would it be possible for the Secretary of State for Defence to make an early statement bearing in mind two points: the deep disquiet over what has occurred and the decision of the court and, secondly, the need for a statement to be made before the House goes into recess. It would be wrong for the House to go into recess next week without a statement being made, bearing in mind that defence questions will not be answered until 2 June.

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) made the point, points of order are to me. Furthermore, there is to be the spring Adjournment debate tomorrow, when various matters can be raised. On Friday we have Adjournment debates. The sub judice rule no longer applies on this matter, as hon. Members now know. It is no longer a matter for the Chair. It is now a matter for the Government. Undoubtedly those who are sitting on the Treasury Bench have heard the wishes expressed in the House. We must now proceed with our business, the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill money resolution.

Mr. O'Neill: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I accept your ruling and interpretation, but as this matter is the responsibility of the Government and not just——

Madam Speaker: Order. Points of order are to me. I have made it abundantly clear that points of order are to the Chair. I have answered; it is no longer a matter for the Chair. The sub judice rule no longer applies. This is not a matter for debate. I have made the point that Government Ministers are here and will have heard the wishes expressed from the Dispatch Box. It must now be left to the Government. We are not going to enter into a debate on the question. The Question is as on the Order Paper.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I must be allowed to propose the Question. The Question is as on the Order Paper. We shall now take the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question.

Mr. Morris: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. With respect, I am not challenging what you have already told the House, but is not it usual in these circumstances for the Leader of the House to respond, in accordance with the wishes of the Chair?

Madam Speaker: In my experience, it is not usual for a Minister to respond, simply because our practice is that points of order are to the Chair, not to any Minister of the Crown. I have answered as I can only answer—that the sub judice rule no longer applies and it is for the Government, as some stage, to determine what they will do; but 10.20 pm is not the appropriate time.

Resolved,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the provisions of the Act in the sums payable out of such money under any other Act;

(b) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any increase attributable to the provisions of the Act in the sums payable out of that Fund under any other Act; and

(c) the payment of sums into the National Loans Fund and the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees), any Standing Committee appointed for the consideration of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill shall consist of twenty Members, including not fewer than twelve Members sitting for constituencies in Wales.

Hon. Members: Object.

PETITION

Turkish Refugees

10.20 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I rise to present a petition on the plight of refugees who sought safety and asylum in this country, only to find that their families in Turkey are being harassed by the police and armed forces and exposed to great danger.

The majority of the refugees arrived in 1989, and as a demonstration of their desperation, 62 of them are on hunger strike. They demand that the Home Office reviews their cases so that a decision can be taken on whether asylum should be granted to them individually, which would enable their families to join them in this country. The petition says:

"To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of the residents of the United Kingdom, Sheweth. That asylum seekers from Turkey who sought safety in Britain are being denied the right to family life by the refusal of the Home Secretary to grant entry to their husbands, wives and children since they arrived up to three years ago. Wherefore your Petitioners pray your honourable House will urge the Home Secretary to review all cases to enable the families to be reunited in Britain. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray."

I strongly support the petition, which has been signed by 2,995 residents of Islington, Harringey, Hackney, Waltham Forest and other parts. They have shown their compassion for the poor people who have been left alone and vulnerable and who are harassed daily in Turkey. We demand that the Home Secretary takes action to expedite the decisions on those who are on hunger strike, so that their families can be brought here.

To lie upon the Table.

Jubilee Line Extension

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10.23 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise, at a surprisingly appropriate time, the future of the Jubilee line extension.

I shall begin with a brief summary of the story so far. It began on 16 November 1989 when the then Secretary of State for Transport, Mr. Cecil Parkinson, made a statement to the House in response to a question tabled by the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), declaring that he had authorised London Regional Transport to deposit a Bill for the extension of the Jubilee line. The then Secretary of State told the House that the extension would cost £1 billion, of which £400 million would come from private investors. In a written answer he said:

"I warmly welcome this contribution, which is of an unprecedented scale. This is a further example of public and private sector co-operation to the mutual benefit of both." —[*Official Report,* 16 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. *398.*]

The answer was accompanied by a Department of Transport press release to that effect.

It was clear how the Government anticipated the money would be spent in the immediate future—there would be a cost of £40 million to the Exchequer in 1990-91, £150 million and then £240 million in the following two years. It was also made abundantly clear at the beginning that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury had agreed those moneys.

It emerged—not on the same day, but, effectively, immediately—that the main contributors of the private sector money would be Olympia and York, which would contribute £400 million. It was due to pay the first instalment of £40 million on 1 April 1992, the second instalment of £60 million by 1 April 1993 and the rest when the line was functioning. Incidentally, it was announced that a relatively much smaller fish—British Gas—had agreed to pay £25 million.

At the beginning of 1990, it appeared that problems were emerging. It was reported in the daily press that senior London Regional Transport sources had stated that the contribution to be made by Olympia and York was likely to fall from £400 million to £100 million. O and Y reportedly told the Department that it would make its contribution only when the project was finished. O and Y also apparently decided that it wanted to take a percentage of ticket revenue once the line was running. None of that had been foreseen at the beginning.

In the second half of the Second Reading debate of the London Underground Bill, which was to authorise the building of the underground, the then—and current—Minister for Public Transport said:

"I am sorry if I did not make the position clear. The position is that £40 million is payable on 1 April 1992, £60 million on 1 April 1993—that is, £100 million in the next three years—and the balance, £300 million, is spread in relatively small payments over 10 to 15 years thereafter."—[*Official Report,* 24 July 1990; Vol. 177, c. 369.]

Financial details then receded from the main part of the debate while other issues occupied the House and the promoters. The Bill had a long passage through both Houses and had contested Committee stages in both Houses. It had a controversial aspect with regard to the route under Parliament square and there was a not insubstantial battle in which I was, for obvious reasons, directly involved not only about whether there would be stations to intersect at Waterloo and London Bridge and at a new station—still called Canada Water, but known to locals as Surrey Docks—but about whether there would be additional stations at Blackfriars and Bermondsey. It looked as if there would, and then it looked as if there would not.

There was intensive lobbying and a meeting—the Minister was kind enough to see us—with representatives of the local authority in Southwark. Eventually, in the autumn of the year before last, it was confirmed that the Southwark and Bermondsey stations were a secure part of the package, and the Minister was good enough to say that, just because they were the last to be finally confirmed, it did not mean that they were at any more risk than other parts of the line. That changed the line from being a commuter drain linking the main interchange stations to Canary Wharf and the Isle of Dogs to being a line that would allow local residential and working communities to profit from it as well.

The Bill involved other controversies in both Houses before it finished in Committee, and it ended its passage through Parliament in March, just before the general election. It received its Royal Assent in March 1992, as one of the last pieces of the previous Parliament's legislation.

At about the same time, it emerged that Olympia and York was facing huge financial problems. It became clear from *The Financial Times* of 25 and 26 March that Olympia and York was to restructure its finances and that it faced $20 billion of debts.

On 26 March, it was reported that the Department of Transport said that the decision to give the Jubilee line the go-ahead in November 1989 hinged on the agreement of Canary Wharf to contribute £400 million towards the project. A "senior civil servant" said:

"If for any reason that [contribution] is not possible, then any such radical change in funding will require ministers to consider all the issues before arriving at any decision."

For the first time, it appeared that the whole project was expressly dependent on the £400 million from Olympia and York.

On 1 April, in the middle of the general election campaign when questions were being asked about whether the money would be paid and when it seemed that the first deadline for payment had slipped, a "senior civil servant" —we may never know whether it was the same one—said:

"In our experience deadlines in these situations"—

that is, deadlines for payment—

"are not as absolute as they seem. We are not aware of any agreement being signed in the next couple of days."

We arrived at the general election with two things abundantly clear: first, that the £400 million was a pre-condition to the line's extension going ahead and, secondly, that Olympia and York had not fulfilled the first part of the agreement and had not paid the first tranche of money. It was also not clear that it was about to do so.

What is the relevance of this to London, to the public infrastructure and to urban regeneration? The Jubilee line extension is relevant as a crucial part of the regeneration package. In 1981, the Government set up the London Docklands development corporation, principally to work in three boroughs: Newham, Tower Hamlets and my borough of Southwark. One of the key development areas was the Isle of Dogs. It was always foreseen that that was central to the development.

Ten years later, with the building of an enormous new complex—I do not know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether you have seen it at close hand, but we can all see it from far away—that underground infrastructure was clearly central to the Government's plans to develop east of the City, the beginning of the east Thames corridor and the whole regeneration of that part of the docklands.

According to *The Financial Times* of 16 May, Canary Wharf is only 60 per cent. let—that is, the main Olympia and York building, one of the largest office developments in the world. Coincidentally, South Quay, another large development, this time of a 300,000 sq ft building on the south of the river, went into receivership on 15 May. At a time when London is suffering from an enormous glut of office space, unemployment in docklands constituencies is at very high levels. My constituency has the seventh highest unemployment in the United Kingdom.

So it was clear that the redevelopment was vital for employment prospects in London. Lord Brabazon of Tara, the Minister of State, Department of Transport, speaking in another place in the debate on the London Underground Bill, said:

"The Jubilee line . . . will provide a fast link to all points of the compass . . . It is these high quality connections which the Isle of Dogs must have if it is to . . . provide . . . 150,000 jobs by the end of the first decade of the next century.—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 July 1991; Vol. 530, c. 1639.]

The Government have announced the creation of a new agency to deal with docklands regeneration, with Mr. Peter Walker as its head. It seems to me and to my constituents, and it must be generally accepted to be the case, that if we are to continue with the work begun in 1981 —whatever we may think of that process; already there are many criticisms of it—the offices that are already built must now be let, there must be jobs and there must be transport to allow people to get to and from their new places of work.

It is self-evident—certainly, everyone in the east end knows it—that the road routes into and out of docklands are insufficient, in spite of the widening of the roads; that the river is as yet underused and probably would not be able to provide the capacity to meet all all the demand even if it were given a chance; and that the docklands light railway has proved far too small and inadequate for the task. A tube link is vital. Whatever people may think of the Jubilee line, as opposed to an extension of the Northern or Bakerloo line, being the Government's priority in 1989, the decision was made: a fundamental link was to be provided between the west end, Westminster, Whitehall, the City, the south of the river and Canary Wharf. The final obvious point is that the news of a new line south of the river came as an enormous relief in one sense to those of us south of the river who, for many years—if not decades—have lived in an area that has been the white hole on the underground map.

Rumours are rife that the Government have an interest in this project not only in terms of the £1 billion-plus of public money, but because they are contemplating relocating civil servants to the Canary Wharf development. We know that the Department of the Environment buildings in Marsham street will soon not be able to be used, and it is rumoured, although it is as yet uncertain, that Department of the Environment civil servants may therefore be moving to the new development—"pour encourager les autres", I suppose.

I now want to ask some questions that follow on from my question to the Secretary of State at Question Time today. I am glad to see the new Minister for Transport in London, whom I welcome to his job and with whom I expect to have a worthwhile, positive and constructive relationship. He knows that he commands widespread respect in the House. His first test will be whether he can deliver the right answers tonight.

First, why was no formal agreement signed? The Government let it appear that a deal had been done and that here was a great public and private sector partnership, but nobody appears to have committed the private sector to delivering the readies and, if the development is supposed to be a model to encourage the private sector into the public transport system—whether tube or railway —it does not seem to be a wonderful precedent.

Secondly, have the Government spent the money mentioned as being committed by them in the initial years —the money referred to in the Secretary of State's original statement? What have they spent so far? If that money has been spent, was it prudent to spend it without having secured an absolute guarantee of the money coming in from the private sector? What is the point of the public purse spending the money for a partnership deal when there is no guarantee that the private money will come in and when it is therefore possible that the whole scheme will be aborted?

Thirdly, if backing for Olympia and York was looking shaky as far back as March 1990, why did not the Government do something about securing the deal then?

Fourthly, what is the truth about the proposition that we have been told was put to the Government, to the effect that Olympia and York wanted to gain revenue from ticket sales on the Jubilee line once it was running?

Fifthly, if the "senior civil servant" is right and deadlines are not absolute in this case, is it normal practice for the Government to let the private sector dictate and determine when it pays money that it has said it will pay by a certain day—particularly when the matter has substantial public implications?

Sixthly, why was it not made clear at the very beginning that the Olympia and York contribution was the pre-condition for the whole package going ahead and that, without it, nothing would happen? That was the import of the answer given to me by the Secretary of State at 3.10 pm today.

Seventhly, when the debt was reconstructed—we are talking about very recent history—was the financial contribution of Olympia and York to the Jubilee line reconsidered as well? Is that part of the negotiation? If it is, and as public money is involved, surely the Government have an interest in the renegotiations that we understand have been continuing even today, with a further extension from the 11 banks that are funding Olympia and York. Should not the Government now be able to tell the House what is happening instead of saying that they do not know what the position is?

Lastly, the Secretary of State told the House today that future owners of Canary Wharf would have to carry on the financial commitment to the Jubilee line if there were to be a change of ownership as a result of a sale on or an entry into receivership or administration. Would that be a written agreement and a firm deal? Would it be secured by a contract that was binding in law which gives preference if one is a creditor if something goes wrong? Or would it simply be another informal back-room deal?

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

To sum up, the significance of this subject is that it appears that the Government entered into a partnership for their priority tube line proposal in London two and a half years ago without ensuring that the contract was legally binding. By failing to do that, they have denied themselves the security that a contractually bound contracting party has if anything goes wrong. What does that mean for the scheme? Is it responsible for the Government to say now that if things go wrong they just will not intervene? What does that mean for the commitment to the regeneration of the docklands?

It is no reflection on the Minister, but I propose to ask the ombudsman—the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration—to investigate this aspect of the history of these events. What were the Government doing? Were they guilty of maladministration? I must make it abundantly clear that I will refer this question to the ombudsman not because I and others do not want the scheme to go ahead; quite the reverse. However, we cannot leave multi-billion pound schemes to chance. My constituents and I now want the scheme to go ahead. It is committed so far that we must go forward and not back. We look forward to a reply that makes it clear that the scheme will go ahead and that the Jubilee line extension will be built.

10.41 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for raising the future of the Jubilee line extension, as he gives me the opportunity to set out the Government's position in full. In so doing, I hope to answer some of the hon. Gentleman's questions. I am also grateful for his kind comments. He described our potential relationship as worth while, positive and encouraging. I am not sure whether I can be entirely encouraging tonight, but I will do my best.

I start by outlining the Government's decision to support the line. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey has already related most of the history that I am about to relate. However, for the record, an extension of the Jubilee line from Green park to Stratford via Waterloo, London Bridge and Canary Wharf was recommended in the report on the east London rail study that was issued by the Department of Transport's consultants in July 1989. At that time, the then Secretary of State said that in considering its findings, he had paid particular attention to the way in which the line was to be financed. He made it clear that the line would be built only if sufficient contributions were forthcoming from property developers and other landowners who would benefit.

It was in that spirit of partnership, on which a correct degree of emphasis was laid, that the plans for the line were worked up in the months immediately following. In November 1989, the Secretary of State announced that he was authorising London Regional Transport to deposit a Bill for the extension on the basis that substantial contributions from developers would be forthcoming.

In announcing his consent to deposit the Bill, the Secretary of State told Parliament, in a speech to which the hon. Gentleman has already referred:

"The Jubilee line extension will cost about £1 billion in today's prices to which developers will over time be making a cash contribution of just over £400 million. I warmly welcome this contribution, which is of an unprecedented scale. This is a further example of public and private sector co-operation to the mutual benefit of both."

After setting out the figures, as the hon. Gentleman did, the Secretary of State said:

"My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has agreed that these sums should be made available from the public expenditure reserve which was set with this in mind." —[*Official Report*, 16 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. *398*.]

Since the deposit of the Bill, the hon. Gentleman will know that the Government's commitment to the line has grown. By last year, the expenditure plans for the three years 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95 committed Government funds of £304 million, £521 million and £477 million respectively. Those plans were based on an expectation of developer contributions of over £40 million in 1992-93 and more than £60 million in 1993-94. There was a further expectation that, after the end of the construction period—that is, from 1997 onwards—a further series of contributions would be made by developers, totalling some £300 million in cash.

Those figures graphically illustrate the extent to which, in taking forward the plans for the JLE in partnership with contributing developers, the Government have been prepared to be the senior partner. Over the planned 53-month construction period between 1992 and 1996, we envisage spending some £1·5 billion of Government funds, alongside contributions of over £100 million from developers. In other words, of the £1·6 billion total to be incurred during the construction period, over 90 per cent. is to be met by Government.

Governments do not, of course, agree to undertake expenditure of that order without first considering very carefully the benefits to be gained from doing so. One set of benefits are those to be gained from the regeneration of the inner-city areas through which the line is to pass, in particular by those involved in the development of prime sites along the route. The most notable example of such beneficiaries was Olympia and York. It was, of course, the recognition that it stood to gain such benefits at Canary Wharf that prompted the company to enter into its partnership with Government to fund the line in the first place.

Let us, however, consider some of the wider implications of the benefits of the JLE, recognition of which prompted the Government to accept a major partnership role, and which underpin our commitment to the line. The JLE will have a capacity of around 15,000 passengers per peak hour in each direction. It will run for 10 miles from Green Park, 7·5 miles underground and 2·5 on the surface. As the hon. Gentleman said, the first new station to be built along the route is to be here at Westminster; as hon. Members know, the station at Westminster is incorporated in the sketch plan for the new parliamentary building.

Beyond Westminster, at Waterloo, the line will provide major new interchanges with the Bakerloo and Northern lines, with British Rail's main lines for Southampton and the south coast and with the new channel tunnel international terminal. The new interchanges will significantly relieve rail congestion on British Rail's Waterloo and City line, and improve connections to the west end.

Continuing eastwards, we come to four stations in the constituency of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, each of which will confer substantial benefits. First, there is to be an entirely new station at

Southwark, which will provide an interchange with Waterloo East by means of a new subway, new stairs and new escalators. At London Bridge, there are to be improvements to the Northern line facilities, as well as new deep-level Jubilee line platforms and a substantially expanded ticket hall. At Bermondsey, there is to be another entirely new station, and at Canada Water there is to be a new interchange station with two new deep-level Jubilee line platforms and two new platforms on the East London line between Rotherhithe and Surrey Quays stations.

The hon. Gentleman will know that, when the Government gave the go-ahead for the extension in 1989, we left open the question whether new stations at those places could be justified pending further analysis. That work was completed in 1990, and as the hon. Gentleman said, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) announced that, as the work had shown the economic case for the stations to be positive, the Government were prepared to approve the construction of both. We were glad to do that: those stations will be of real benefit to residents of Bermondsey and Southwark.

Beyond Canada Water, the extension is to go back under the Thames to Canary Wharf, where there is to be an interchange with the DLR. The benefits of going to Canary Wharf consist mainly of the regeneration and transport benefits of additional docklands employment. The calculation of the transport benefits that the extension is expected to bring was based on assumptions about the growth of employment in certain areas, particularly the Isle of Dogs. That growth was assumed to derive principally from a transfer of jobs from central London to docklands. Those assumptions about employment growth involved substantially more people working in docklands at an earlier time than now seems likely. Nevertheless, when growth comes, the extension will play an important part in that regeneration.

Beyond Canary Wharf, the extension is to go back under the Thames to north Greenwich, where a new station and interchange with buses and "park and ride" located on the Greenwich peninsula east of the Blackwall tunnel southern approach road is planned. A particular benefit here is that engineering provision will be made for the possible further extension of the Jubilee line to the royal docks if that proves beneficial at some future time.

Finally, beyond north Greenwich, the extension is to cross the Thames for the fourth time, heading north and surfacing just south of the existing north London line station at Canning Town. It will then run alongside the north London line for two and a half miles, through the existing station at West Ham to Stratford. At Canning Town, there will be an interchange with the DLR Beckton extension and at West Ham, there will be an interchange with the Hammersmith and City and the District lines. At Stratford, there will be a new terminus station with interchanges with the Central line, with British Rail main line routes and, perhaps in future, with a channel tunnel rail link terminal and a crossrail station.

All that adds up to at least four substantial benefits. The first is improving connections between the west end and docklands, and between those areas and the major south London termini of Waterloo and London Bridge. The second is improving access to inner-city areas such as Southwark and Bermondsey. The third is the provision of additional river crossings, and the fourth is eliminating derelict wastelands, reinvigorating local communities, and expanding London's commercial centre with new employment opportunities.

Substantial benefits do not, however, come without substantial costs. I have already said that both Government and developers envisage a combined total of £1·6 billion to be spent during the construction period. In accordance with the Government's normal procedures for evaluating the economic case for undertaking major urban rail investment projects, detailed cost-benefit appraisals of the line have been undertaken.

In terms of the measurable costs and benefits normally taken into account in such appraisals, the line does not meet the established criteria for approval. We would not normally be prepared to proceed with projects that failed to meet those criteria. In this case, however, we were prepared to go ahead, and the promised contributions from developers were clearly important in that decision.

Moreover, we have always recognised that the case for the Jubilee line extension depended not just on the measurable benefits but to a significant extent on the regeneration benefits for the docklands area, which are not captured in the conventional cost-benefit procedures.

Let there be no misunderstanding, however, about the basis on which the Government undertook the commitment to regeneration. From the first, it was made clear to all concerned that the line would be built only if sufficient private sector contributions were forthcoming.

By far the largest, indeed the crucial, contribution was pledged by Olympia and York. The company's problems are well known. We understand that Olympia and York's creditors recently agreed to advance the company sufficient funds to enable it to continue trading at Canary wharf until the end of the month. I am given to understand that the creditors are meanwhile considering business plans put forward by Olympia and York, with a view to ensuring the company's long-term viability. No doubt that will include the question of Jubilee line contributions. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport made clear to the hon. Gentleman in Question time in the House today, he can see no prospect of authorising the start of construction until and unless those agreed contributions are forthcoming.

I should make it clear that we are still talking about a cash contribution. The hon. Gentleman referred to press speculation to the effect that some Government Departments have been considering the possibility of moving some staff to docklands, and that some deal may be done that will remove the need for Olympia and York to contribute to the cost of the Jubilee line extension. That is not so. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has made it clear that the criteria which will govern any decision about whether staff should be relocated will be the suitability of the accommodation offered and, crucially, whether it will provide good value for money.

Any examination of the options will be directed towards docklands as a whole, not to any one developer. Let me make it clear that the question of possible staff moves to docklands is entirely separate from considerations of funding for the Jubilee line extension. It follows that we continue to look to Olympia and York, or its creditors, to come up with the contribution originally pledged.

[Mr. Steve Norris]

In the time available to me, I have not been able to answer all the questions that the hon. Member asked me. I shall write to him on the balance of those questions, which I am sure I can agree with him shortly hereafter.

To sum up, we continue to expect developer contributions to be forthcoming so that the line can proceed on the basis originally planned. The basis for proceeding has always been one of partnership between Government and the private sector, and "partnership" is the word that I wish to emphasise in this short debate.

I hope that, in the interests of all concerned, the contribution that has always been anticipated to this important development from the developer—which, in the taxpayers' interest, ought to be forthcoming, given the substantial gains that will accrue to those developers—will be received in the near future.

Mr. Simon Hughes: With the leave of the House, I think that there is one minute left. I thank the Minister for his reply. I must say the obvious to him—for as long as——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at seven minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 19 May 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

QUEEN'S SPEECH (ANSWER TO ADDRESS)

The Vice-Chamberlain of the Household reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Address, as follows:

I have received with great satisfaction the loyal and dutiful expression of your thanks for the Speech with which I opened the present Session of Parliament.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords]*

ALLIANCE AND LEICESTER (GIROBANK) BILL

(By Order)

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday.

PITTENWEEM HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

1. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what changes he intends to make in regard to the opting-out procedures for schools.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Eric Forth): The current arrangement by which schools apply to the Secretary of State for grant-maintained status following a favourable ballot of parents is proving very successful. We have no plans to change it. The latest approval of Chatham grammar school for girls brings the total of grant-maintained schools to 250. The rate of GM applications has doubled since the general election.

Mr. Ashton: If the arrangement has been so successful, why have only 1 per cent. of schools in Britain applied? Four years ago, Mrs. Thatcher said that by now 50 per cent. of schools in Britain would have opted out. Why have only 1 per cent. done so? Have there not been serious problems at opted-out schools in Stratford, with allegations of racism? Is it not a fact that the Catholic bishops are not happy about the random selections? Is it not also a fact that governors in some of those schools have far too many powers which they have abused? The whole system has become a flop.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman must contain his impatience. Although 10 per cent. of secondary schools have applied for grant-maintained status, we are in the early stages of an exciting departure in our education policy and in the history of education in this country. If there are any difficulties in GM applications, they have probably arisen because sour and negative Labour-controlled local authorities have placed every possible obstacle in the way of schools trying to get out from under them and deliver a proper quality of education to their pupils. All I can say to the hon. Gentleman is, "Watch this space."

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Does my hon. Friend agree that the difference between Conservatives and the Opposition is that we believe in parents and families being allowed to choose schools while they believe in bureaucrats?

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is absolutely correct. The key difference is that we truly believe that we must correctly look to parents and governors for care and concern for children's education. The recent history of education has shown that many local education authorities have neither the will nor the capability to give our children a proper education. That is what grant-maintained status brings. That is the promise for the future.

Mr. Enright: Why have the Catholic bishops in their Low week meeting continued their opposition to opting out? Will the Minister give special consideration to Catholic schools in that respect?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman is not quite correct in a very important sense. As they are entitled to, the

Catholic bishops are asking searching questions about the nature of our policies and the direction in which we wish to go. However, there is no one better placed than my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to commune with the Catholic bishops to satisfy them about the direction in which we are going and to ensure that we all move forward in the way that we want and on the basis of our election manifesto. I promise the hon. Gentleman that.

Mr. Dunn: Does my hon. Friend accept that we on the Conservative Benches fully support the procedures for achieving grant-maintained status? Indeed, we go further and support the grammar schools, the city technology colleges, the assisted places scheme, the Church schools and anything that maximises parental choice. That is in direct contrast to the socialist Opposition parties.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. and hon. Friends and I fought the recent election campaign on the basis of very clear and explicit undertakings about the future of education. Our election victory endorses that view. It is sad but predictable that Opposition Members still cannot accept that and that they even now seem to want to resist the inevitability and the desirability of the movement towards grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Straw: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment. He referred to searching questions asked by the Catholic bishops. When will he give some straight answers to those searching questions, in particular the question about when the current level of bribes—what the Government call preferential funding—of opted-out schools will end?

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will write to the Catholic bishops within the next few days. The bishops asked the questions of my right hon. Friend and it is to them that he will give the reply. As to the rest of the questions that no doubt are burning in the hon. Gentleman's mind, our White Paper, which will be published in July, will answer them all and will, I am sure, satisfy him completely.

2. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many Dorset schools have now opted for direct funding by his Department.

Mr. Forth: I am pleased to report that there are six grant-maintained schools in Dorset.

Mr. Bruce: Does my hon. Friend realise that, although we talk about only 10 per cent. of schools having applied for grant-maintained status, the other 90 per cent.—and in fact all the schools in my constituency—that have not applied for grant-maintained status now have a tool that they can use to go to the education committee and say, "Please give me what I need for my school through the education authority, or I will opt for grant-maintained status"? Therefore, 100 per cent. of schools now have far more control over their finances than was the case before that excellent policy was in place.

Mr. Forth: I thank my hon. Friend for the spirit of his question. He has emphasised a key point. It is now for parents and governors in each school to look at how they want their school to develop. If they are persuaded that grant-maintained status is the future, it is for them to demonstrate that through the balloting procedure and then to present their proposals to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He will obviously want to consider each case on its merits, but he will look positively at the applications.

Special Educational Needs

3. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that young people with special educational needs beyond the age of 19 years are provided with continuity of provision.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Nigel Forman): The further education funding councils and local education authorities will have the duty, under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, to ensure that appropriate special needs provision is made in further education for all age groups including adult students.

Sir John Hannam: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment and thank him for that answer. Is he aware that, although there is a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure that handicapped students get the necessary education past the age of 19, many local authorities, including mine in Devon, are not providing that funding for those students? Will my hon. Friend examine that matter and ensure that that statutory responsibility, which was clearly enunciated in his answer, is carried into effect?

Mr. Forman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind opening remarks. As chairman of the all-party disablement group, he will know that the issue he raises is essentially a matter for local education authorities and, in future, for funding councils. The Government believe that disabilities should not be a barrier to access to further education. The duties under the Act are quite clear, in that they carry forward earlier duties which were enshrined in the Education Act 1944. I shall certainly look carefully at my hon. Friend's important points.

Grant-maintained Schools

4. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many applications for grant-maintained status he has received since 10 April.

6. **Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will set out the Government's long-term plans for the expansion of the grant-maintained schools sector.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): Thirteen schools have applied for grant-maintained status since 10 April, about twice the number of applications receive the month before. The number of grant-maintained approvals reached 250 today, as the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) announced earlier this afternoon, including 24 approvals since 10 April. I expect the number to continue to rise as more and more parents seek the clear advantages of grant-maintained status for their schools. The rate of growth will continue to be decided by parental wishes in school ballots. In time, I expect grant-maintained status to become the natural organisational model, particularly for secondary education throughout England.

Mr. Paice: I welcome my right hon. Friend to his long-overdue appointment to the Cabinet and to his

responsibility for this important policy area. As grant-maintained status becomes the norm for schools throughout Britain during this Parliament, will he make it absolutely clear that while it is perfectly valid and, indeed, desirable for schools to form consortia after they have become grant maintained, he will not accept applications from great swards of schools trying to become a consortium before the fact and to become some form of self-perpetuating local education authority?

Mr. Patten: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. Although I understand that there may be distinct advantages in some schools—for example, a secondary school with several feeder primary schools—opting out together to achieve better management, I am simply not prepared to countenance the recreation by the back door of old-style, obstructive local education authorities.

Mr. Foster: I am sure that the Secretary of State is well aware of anxiety throughout the country about the large number of educational changes that have taken place in recent years and the lack of consultation about them. Will he give us an assurance that there will be adequate time for consultation on the new legislation that he proposes? Furthermore, will he give an assurance that consultation will not take place mainly during the school holidays?

Mr. Patten: In due course I shall publish a White Paper. In the meantime, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give full and whole-hearted support to the two excellent grant-maintained schools in his constituency.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be particularly beneficial if secondary schools that obtained grant-maintained status were accompanied by their feeder primary schools? Does he further agree that clusters of such schools in rural areas or denominational schools would be even more appropriate?

Mr. Patten: Both the examples that my hon. Friend gives are good ones. In the next year or so, we may well see schools adopting different ways of promoting their own movement to grant-maintained status. So much interest has there been in schools that have led the movement, such as the excellent Great Barr school in Birmingham—the biggest secondary school in the country, grant maintained or not—that they have been inundated by people ringing the self-starting helpline for advice on how to achieve grant-maintained status in the way that those schools did.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Secretary of State assure the House that he will refuse grant-maintained status to any school that does not pledge to admit students with special needs?

Mr. Patten: I shall examine, as I have to by law, every proposal——

Mr. Morgan: Answer the question.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman shows that he can do joined-up shouting. He certainly cannot do joined-up thinking. I shall consider—*[Interruption.]* I do not think that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) welcomes the incursions and support from the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). I shall consider, as any Secretary of State from any party would have to do, every proposal put to me on its merits, as I am enjoined to do by law.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my right hon. Friend give a more positive response to the supplementary question from my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) about the importance of junior and infant schools applying for grant-maintained status? I thank the Department, my right hon. Friend and his predecessors for granting grant-maintained status to Kettleshulme Church of England junior school, as it was then—Kettleshulme St. James' as it is now—which assumed grant-maintained status on 1 April.

Mr. Patten: I apologise to my hon. Friend if he thought that I was not warm enough in responding to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). What it would be like if I got my hands round his throat, I do not know. I warmly accept the thanks to my Department and my predecessor, my right hon. and learned Friend the present Home Secretary, who did so much to forward the cause of education in Britain during his 15-month tenure. I look forward to visiting my hon. Friend's constituency, if I am invited, and paying a state visit to the school which has just opted out there.

Mr. Straw: The right hon. Gentleman well knows that the main reason that schools have applied to opt out is the level of financial inducements which give them, to quote the Prime Minister's words, an advantage of at least £150,000 in running costs in a year and twice the level of capital grants. In view of that high level of bribe offered to schools to opt out, why do the Secretary of State and his colleagues continue to dodge the question, "Will those bribes continue?"

Mr. Patten: As the hon. Gentleman knows, at this time of year anyone concerned with a future expenditure programme will consider the whole programme. I, along with the rest of my Cabinet colleagues, will present plans for future public expenditure at the right time. In the grant-maintained schools that I have visited, the freedom that grant-maintained status has bestowed on them has been foremost in the minds of the governors and head teachers. Nothing could have been clearer when I visited Small Heath grant-maintained school in central Birmingham last week. Those parents, governors and head teachers, who had had to face the bullying of Birmingham local education authority, which tried to prevent them from opting out, presented a good picture of the real benefit, which is freedom in education.

Further and Higher Education

5. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on participation rates in further and higher education.

Mr. Forman: Participation in further and higher education is at record levels and rising. This year, provisional information indicates that 87 per cent. of 16-year-olds and 74 per cent. of 17-year-olds are participating in some form of education and training, including both schools and colleges. That compares with 67 per cent. and 52 per cent. respectively in 1979. The participation rate for young people in full-time higher education has doubled since 1979, from one in eight to one in four. We expect it to be one in three by the end of the decade.

Mr. Field: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the Government's great success stories has been the tremendous increase in the number of students going on to further and higher education? Will he arrange to give more publicity to the access funds that the Government have made available to assist students with their studies? Will he also consider discussions with the Secretary of State for National Heritage, to find out whether some of the national lottery funds could be made available to students pursuing a career in the arts, for example opera, so that they can sing the praises of the Government's educational policies to Opposition parties?

Mr. Forman: I agree with my hon. Friend. He is right to draw attention to the Government's success record in expanding further and higher education. He will know that access funds cover about 90,000 students in further and higher education and that three out of four applications for help are successful. As for his ingenious proposal for support from the national lottery, it is far too early to say anything about that. As he showed by his question, he knows that that is essentially a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage.

Mr. Turner: Does the Minister agree that participation rates in higher and especially in further education would be greatly helped, first, if the Government had not cut funds to colleges this financial year and, secondly, if there were not such heavy constraints on unemployed people, who are exempt from taking higher and further education courses under the 21-hour rule?

Mr. Forman: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman takes that line, given that nine out of 10 of our 16-year-olds, and about three out of four 17-year-olds are in further education and training. Our record compares favourably with that of other countries.

Mr. Brooke: Although the participation rates that my right hon. Friend described are gratifying, is he satisfied with the number of people securing qualifications for higher education in mathematics and scientific subjects?

Mr. Forman: One can never be satisfied with the rate of qualification and one would always wish to see even greater progress made. However, I believe that the reforms of the national curriculum and the changes that we made in the Further and Higher Education Act all create a valid framework that will assist greater progress.

Trinity School, Leamington

7. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about Trinity comprehensive school in Leamington budgeting to raise £30,000 a year from parental contributions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations. Legislation specifically forbids parents from being required to pay for such things as books, equipment and school activities during the school day. But parents can and always have been able to make voluntary contributions. The manner in which such contributions are sought is a management issue for governors and head teachers.

Mr. Mullin: I put it to the Minister that this is the thin end of a very large wedge and that, all over the country, parents are now being asked to contribute to their children's education. I put it to him that the principle of free state education has been abandoned. Before the Minister expresses hurt at that suggestion, may I ask him to tell us what he is doing to put a stop to that?

Mr. Forth: That question displays a typically mean-minded attitude—not so much of the hon. Gentleman, but of other Labour Members. I remind the House—it seems necessary to repeat this until it sinks in with Labour Members—that spending per pupil in schools increased by more than 40 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and this year. Against that background, I believe that it is quite acceptable—indeed, laudable—that parents are prepared to come forward and to give voluntarily of their time and of their efforts for fund raising to help their child's school. I see nothing wrong with that. I believe that it helps the team spirit, which is developing in our schools, thanks partly to grant-maintained status and the local management of schools, which encourages parents to work together with governors and teachers to improve the quality of education. The hon. Gentleman has got it wrong, but I am not surprised about that.

Ms. Armstrong: Is the Minister totally unaware of the anger and dismay with which parents face this issue? Rather than being complacent, will the Minister address the concerns of parents who want a good education for every child, whether or not they can afford that? It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that that is available.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Lady is about five or six weeks too late. The truth is that parents have perceived correctly that the standards of education are increasing, that their young people are getting better opportunities and that the quality of education is improving. That is at least in part due to the fact that parents are coming forward to give of their time and efforts to help schools improve. That is the opposite of the attitude of Labour Members who cannot see past the local education authorities. Parents want to see past those authorities, which is why schools are opting out.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

8. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will indicate the amount of university research funding which relates to treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mr. Forman: Universities Funding Council support for research is distributed by reference to a range of broad cost centres. There is no specific funding for research into ME or chronic fatigue syndrome. The UFC allocated £673 million for research in 1992-93, of which £78 million related to clinical medicine.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the interim results be circulated to general practitioners?

Mr. Forman: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's concern for and great knowledge of this subject. He will know that the Institute of Psychiatry's study of chronic fatigue syndrome is a project funded by the Medical Research Council, a body which is no longer the responsibility of my Department. However, I understand that no interim

results have been submitted either to the MRC or to Ministers. Whether an interim result is circulated to GPs, when it is available, will be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Riddick: Will my hon. Friend confirm that any student taking advantage of that research funding would have to belong to the National Union of Students? Will he confirm that he intends to abolish that iniquitous closed shop?

Mr. Forman: I can confirm to my hon. Friend, whose long-standing interest in the subject is well known, that my Department is looking closely at the subject. We are urgently reviewing the matter.

Teachers' Pay

9. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received concerning the funding of the teachers' pay award; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have received a number of representations.

Mr. Madden: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that in Bradford, for example, the failure of the Government fully to fund the teachers' pay award last year and this year has plunged the education service into a financial crisis with the prospect of 150 lost teaching posts and consequential damage to the quality of education received by our schoolchildren? Will he consider meeting a delegation of the local education authorities affected, through the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, and urgently consider making additional funding available to avoid teaching posts being lost?

Mr. Patten: Rather than taking up time with such a meeting, I urge the hon. Gentleman to pass on the information that in the current year the Government have given an extra £60 million to bridge the gap between the money allocated to local education authorities and the level they need fully to fund the pay award, and that many education authorities, such as Bradford, could greatly improve their performance by cutting out central administrative waste, by removing surplus school places and by extending the range of services put out to compulsory competitive tendering. Such measures result in more teachers in the classroom. The hon. Gentleman might also pass on to the AMA the news that it will be seen from figures to be announced shortly that last year's threats of cuts have turned out to be totally false.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that under pay review body arrangements he expects the teaching profession to be much better paid —it is already a great deal better paid than it has ever been —that he welcomes that and believes that it will help to raise standards in the profession, which in turn will raise teaching standards for the children?

Mr. Patten: We are lucky to have our 400,000 teachers. Their professional status and standing has been enhanced by the pay review body and I know that that professionalism will increase in future years.

Mr. Cryer: The Secretary of State shows remarkable ignorance of the difficulties that LEAs in general, and Bradford in particular, face. Is he aware that Bradford's education authority is facing increasing school rolls, unlike many similar authorities, and that it has a massive problem of crumbling schools, all of which put pressure on educational funding? Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that he will examine sympathetically, rather than in the arrogant fashion that he has displayed so far, the request by Bradford fully to fund the education award, which would be a decent and fair attitude for a sympathetic Secretary of State to take?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman should realise that Bradford must put its own house in order. It is not exactly in the forefront of LEAs in Britain. It could do much more by cutting back on administration and by putting out more services to competitive tender, so getting children better taught by more teachers. We shall see, from announcements to be made by my noble friend Lady Blatch in another place shortly, just how last year's pandemonium and tumult about the onset of teacher redundancies turned out this year. Each year we get claims about there being great cuts in the teaching force and each year they turn out to be wrong.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the average salary of a classroom teacher is now £18,800 a year, which is 36 per cent. higher than it was under the last Labour Government, and that [illegible] is good reason why the number of applications for teacher training, at 28,800 is the highest it has been for the last 20 years? Does he agree that in view of the huge investment made in teachers' salaries by the Government, a rigorous system of assessment for teacher performance is absolutely vital?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is perfectly right. We have a better paid teaching profession than ever before, with more people wanting to enter the profession than at any time since the 1960s. I confirm that assessment will remain a firm part of the future way in which teachers are remunerated.

Selection

10. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he has proposals to introduce selection by examination for secondary school entry.

11. **Ms. Estelle Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has to introduce selection by examination for secondary school entry.

Mr. John Patten: We have consistently made it clear that the Government do not intend to impose any particular organisational pattern for schools. It is, in the first instance, for local education authorities and school governors to establish the organisation most appropriate for their area, in the light of local needs and the wishes of parents and the community.

We firmly believe in a diversity of provision of schools and in maximising choice for parents. We are ready to consider any application for a change in a school's character put forward by a local education authority or by the governors of voluntary schools or grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Griffiths: Why cannot the Secretary of State see that the selective opt-out structure will not mean that

parents choose schools for their children, but that the schools choose the parents and children that they want? That will mean chaos, as many disappointed parents will appeal against the consignment of their children as an educational underclass forced to go to schools that have not opted out, which the Government deliberately fund less well than opted-out schools.

Mr. Patten: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's serious interest in the subject. Unfortunately, toward the end of his question he slipped into the lingua franca of the early 1960s when so much damage was done to the education system. The grant-maintained school system is beginning to show parents the positive opportunities that can be given to them by having a range of schools from which to choose. The more grant-maintained schools there are, the more pressure there will be on schools that underperform to perform better.

Ms. Morris: How will the Minister avoid the problems of entries to specialist or magnet schools by competitive examination, should the supply of places not meet the demand for them in any one specialism?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Lady comes to this place with a reputation for knowing a lot about education. I believe that to be so. Therefore, she knows as well as I do that today about a quarter of local education authorities have selection for a number of schools in their area. In addition, the excellent city technology colleges have spread across the country. I should like a number of schools to take the route of specialisation, developing a leading edge in technology, music, the arts or some other subject.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my right hon. Friend confirm, however, that selection has been retained in several areas? One of the problems in those areas is that pupils in junior and primary schools are often funded on a per capita basis at a lower level than pupils of the same age in middle schools. Does he agree that, if selection were to become more widely available, it would be wrong to maintain that differential? Will he take steps to eliminate the current differential?

Mr. Patten: It is certainly open to local education authorities to change their funding formula within their counties. I shall look specifically at the point that my hon. Friend raises and write to him in greater detail.

Mr. Butcher: Will my right hon. Friend take a close look at the German secondary education system, where tripartite selection puts children into high schools, technical schools and grammar schools at the expense of the state? Does my right hon. Friend not think it regrettable that selective schools are now predominantly fee-paying, because many parents would like free access to selective state schools?

Mr. Patten: The German education system has been praised by many educationists from right, left and centre of the political spectrum in this country, who have told us that we should take a look at those schools. Parents should have the widest possible choice of schools in their area, but parents and the local community should lay down the shape and pattern of that education, rather than its being done by diktat from my desk, attractive though that possibility is.

Mr. Fatchett: Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that, if standards have risen and the stay-on rate of post-16 education has increased, it is the result of a system that is predominantly comprehensive, and the comprehensive revolution in this country has been a success? Why do Conservative Members and the Secretary of State want to turn the clock back to a system in which one child out of five was deemed to be a success and four out of five deemed to be failures? Why do the Government trade in failure and not try to build on success?

Mr. Patten: That is the authentic voice of the early 1960s. The hon. Gentleman is refighting battles that the Labour party has long lost. It is no wonder that the Labour party lost the recent general election.

Secondary Schools (Admissions)

12. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the impact of the Greenwich judgment on this year's secondary schools admissions systems.

Mr. Forth: The great majority of local education authorities do not appear to have had any significant practical problems with school admissions following the Greenwich judgment, this year or last year. We are aware of some difficulties in the London borough of Bromley. The Department is due to meet that local authority shortly and we hope that the problems there will soon be resolved.

Mr. Merchant: Is my hon. Friend aware that 300 out-of-borough children have been accepted so far into the London borough of Bromley and that that presents a problem? Is he aware that the director of education has written to parents in Bromley warning them that, as a consequence, he is as yet unable to place children from Bromley in schools? How far is that a problem in the rest of the country?

Mr. Forth: I am conscious of the problem in Bromley and my hon. Friend is right to raise it. However, his figures are a little pessimistic. The latest information that I have is that a decreasing number of parents are encountering that problem, which is due to a number of complex factors, not least that parents who receive multiple offers from a number of schools often hold on to them for a long time, thus denying the opportunity to other parents. Such problems must be addressed, certainly at local education authority level. We hope that the boroughs, London education authorities and schools will find ways of resolving those problems satisfactorily. I am optimistic that they will.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Secretary of State recognise that there is genuine concern among parents in Greenwich at their inability to obtain places for their children in popular local schools such as Thomas Tallis as a result of the judgment? Does he recognise that the issue of multiple choice, to which he referred, cannot be resolved by the local education authorities as they will generally be unaware of applications to other authorities, city technology colleges and opt-out schools? What will he do to deal with the problem?

Mr. Forth: I accept that challenges emerge as the education system develops. We are considering the position extremely closely in order to establish what role

should be played by schools, perhaps acting co-operatively, and by local education authorities. Perhaps there is a role for my Department and the Government as a whole. So far, the scale of the problems that have emerged as a result of the Greenwich judgment is not as great in the country as a whole as it may appear to be when considering some specific London boroughs. We shall keep a close eye on the position to assess whether there will be long-term or damaging effects on children's education —the criteria against which the system must be judged.

Mr. Cormack: Will my hon. Friend reconsider the issue? His answer indicated that there is not a problem in many parts of the country, but there is. Is he aware that there is a real problem in Staffordshire, and will he agree to see me to discuss it?

Mr. Forth: We are always willing to hear of the details of any problems that may arise on the ground and in specific local education authorities. The Department does not have a substantial amount of evidence of a real, practical and enduring problem, last year or this year, throughout the country, but I should welcome any further information that my hon. Friend can give me.

Secondary Schools

13. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his assessment of the optimum size of secondary school and ratio of staff to pupils.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no general view on the optimum size for a secondary school. That will always depend on local circumstances. Schools must, however, be able to deliver the national curriculum effectively. Similarly, the need to take account of individual school and pupil factors makes it impossible to set down centrally an optimum pupil:teacher ratio which has any real meaning.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Minister accept that Scottish Members feel that there is some irony in the fact that he is here answering questions on English education but that no Minister with a Scottish portfolio parallel to his is answering questions on Scottish education? What he has said may be reasonable, but in places such as the north of Scotland which are experiencing a rapid population growth we need some criterion whereby Government money will be provided for new schools to be built, since without that others will become so overcrowded that they cannot maintain the standards about which the Government boast.

Mr. Forth: Of course I accept what the hon. Gentleman says, but I assure him that we always look carefully and systematically at the local circumstances surrounding an application for capital and at the local education authorities in question. Those labours are designed to ensure that resources are directed to where they are most needed. As money increasingly follows the pupil, schools able to attract more pupils will inevitably attract more funding. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that that makes sense and will be highly productive. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I ask the House to settle down before Prime Minister's questions.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 May.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Davies: The Prime Minister will recall the support given by all sides of the House and by the public at large to the British armed forces during the Gulf war. In recognition of that and following the verdict of a jury yesterday that nine of our soldiers were unlawfully killed, will the Government take all necessary steps to ensure that criminal proceedings are brought against those responsible? If his commitment to open government is serious, will he ensure that the full details of this incident are made available to the public, because this is not an occasion when there should be a cover up either by the American or the British authorities?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will answer a private notice question about this matter in a few moments. I sympathise with the anguish of the families and with their wish to find out exactly what went wrong. That has been our aim as well.

The sad fact is that in war terrible accidents of this sort do sometimes occur. Clearly we must learn the lessons of this for the future; but I hope that we will not lose sight of the fact that these were American pilots risking their lives alongside our troops in the battle against a common enemy and to liberate Kuwait. I hope that that thought is not lost sight of: without American resolve and support the liberation of Kuwait would not have been possible.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that any minimum and legally binding rate of VAT imposed by the European Commission will be unacceptable to him as well as to the people of this country?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, we are not in favour of minimum rates of VAT, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made that clear in his discussions with our European partners.

Mr. Kinnock: Following the Prime Minister's response just now, may I put it to him that the House is united in its admiration of the risks taken by United States and other service men in the course of the Gulf war; and that the families whose sons are judged to have been unlawfully killed by allied fire are not seeking the identity of any United States personnel? They are seeking the truth about what happened to cause the death of their sons. In common with many others, I believe that they have the right to gain that truth. In addition to what he has already done, will the Prime Minister therefore use all the authority that he has to ensure that every available procedure is employed to see that the full truth is obtained?

The Prime Minister: I entirely understand the right hon. Gentleman's point. In many ways he expresses a view widely held across this country and elsewhere. The United States Government have acted in this case in the same way as they have acted in the case of friendly fire involving their

own forces and their own citizens. A great deal of information has been provided, including by the pilots themselves. They were assured by their authorities that their anonymity would be safeguarded, and they provided information to the inquest on that basis.

This was a tragic accident and the whole House sympathises with the anguish and frustration of the families. The United States Government have shown their sympathy for the bereaved at the highest level. President Bush saw the families; he has responded to their requests to him for more information. But the United States Government also have to weigh up the anguish of the families of their pilots and their obligations to their own citizens. All the relevant considerations have been drawn to their attention, but the decision whether to send pilots to the inquest must be for the United States authorities to make.

Mr. Kinnock: I am sorry to press the Prime Minister, but I must do so. The anguish of which he speaks—the anguish being experienced by the pilots and their families—is obvious; but that anguish will not be increased or diminished if the British families are told the exact truth of the circumstances in which their boys were killed. Will the Prime Minister concentrate on that aspect of the matter, and set any possible legal proceedings aside for the concern of the appropriate authorities, while using his authority to gain the truth? That will not add to or—tragically—diminish the great sadness that we know must be felt by any service men who have been involved in any way in this horrific incident.

The Prime Minister: As I told the right hon. Gentleman a moment ago, the inquest was provided with a great deal of information, including that provided by the pilots themselves. That information has been sought, and it has been provided. I am not in a position to provide any more information: that which is available has been provided.

Q2. **Sir George Gardiner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir George Gardiner: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his publication today of the structure and membership of Cabinet committees. Does he intend to continue to blow the cobwebs of secrecy from Whitehall, and can he apply the same zeal to the antiquated procedures of the House by enabling hon. Members to reach decisions on the Select Committee on Sittings of the House before the summer recess, so that more sensible working hours can be adopted when we return in the autumn?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing my attention to both those points.

As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House told the House last Wednesday, we plan to provide an early opportunity for the House to debate the Select Committee's report on the reform of our procedures. Obviously, hon. Members will want to have their own say on the far-reaching changes that are proposed; I am sure, however, that my right hon. Friend knows my personal belief that the House needs to reform its procedures, and I hope that we shall be able to proceed to such reform as speedily as possible.

As for my hon. Friend's first point, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is looking across Whitehall and beyond, with the aim of incrementally removing unnecessary secrecy. I think that this is a way in which the Government can make their own information more accessible and more responsive to the citizens whom they serve.

Mr. Ashdown: May we leave aside for the moment the clear mishandling of the Oxford friendly-fire inquest by both the United States authorities and the Ministry of Defence, and the clear duty that now lies with the Government—which I hope that the Prime Minister accepts—to pursue those unanswered questions directly with the United States authorities? Will the Prime Minister confirm that he would not permit British soldiers who had committed tragic but human errors in conditions of war to be required to face either inquest or trial on the basis that such mistakes would be made in time of peace? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that we should not require of the United States Government something that we would not permit ourselves?

The Prime Minister: I understand the underlying point that the hon. Gentleman is making, but so much depends on the individual circumstances of the case. I think that the whole House will understand precisely why that must be so. Certainly, there might be circumstances in which the right hon. Gentleman's conclusion would be absolutely right.

Q3. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gill: Given that the Prime Minister will seldom find himself in a better bargaining position in this regard, what assurance can he give the House that issues such as immigration, border controls, Britain's contribution to the European Community budget and its rebate and—this should not be forgotten—the European working time directive will be settled before he ratifies the Maastricht agreement?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises a number of extremely important and, in many ways, tendentious issues. They are matters that relate to existing provisions of the treaty of Rome and they are not directly related to the Maastricht treaty. All the matters to which my hon. Friend has referred are extremely important and I give him the assurance that we shall fight to preserve British interests up to, during and after the ratification of the Maastricht treaty.

Q4. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pendry: In this season of maiden speeches does the Prime Minister recall his own in June 1979 in the Budget debate, when he expressed grave concern about the level of unemployment in his constituency? Since that time he has held high office—Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Chancellor of the Exchequer and now, of course, Prime

Minister. The level of unemployment in Huntingdon by the same count today is 5,483, a staggering increase of 393 per cent. What went wrong exactly?

The Prime Minister: The strict answer to the hon. Gentleman is that I recall clearly my maiden speech, and I doubt whether any hon. Member is ever likely to forget it. It is often an extremely difficult occasion. As for employment prospects, the hon. Gentleman might care to consider how many of my constituents were in work. In my constituency and throughout the whole of the country we have a higher percentage of our population in secure jobs than in any other part of the European Community, with the exception of Denmark.

Q5. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bowis: Now that my right hon. Friend has persuaded trade union leaders to accept democracy in the workplace, will he see what he can do about their attitude to democracy in this place? Perhaps they could start by abandoning their current practice of appointing the Leader of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker: Order. That is not a question for the Prime Minister to answer.

Q6. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Quin: Is the Prime Minister aware that despite the welcome increase in dental treatment last year, Government policies are threatening the future of dentistry within the national health service? What action will the right hon. Gentleman take to resolve the dispute with the dentists, to reverse the ever-increasing cost of dental treatment and to ensure that dentistry will be available to the entire population within the NHS for the long-term future?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) referred a moment ago to the position over the whole period that the Conservative Government have been in power, perhaps I also could do so. There are now 27 per cent. more dentists in the general dental service than there were in 1979. Expenditure on the dental service in England alone exceeded £1 billion last year, an increase of 43 per cent. since 1979. On the vexed question of dental fees, which might have underlain the hon. Lady's supplementary question, a joint inquiry has now concluded its meetings and will report to the dental rates study group. It would not be right for me to comment until conclusions have been produced.

Mr. Rathbone: Might I, like my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner), welcome my right hon. Friend's publishing of the Cabinet committees and sub-committees? I ask my right hon. Friend to confirm that the translation of the inter-ministerial group on drug misuse into a Cabinet sub-committee is additional Government accent for this important area of activity?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I can give my hon. Friend that assurance.

Q7. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Trimble: May I refer the Prime Minister to the speech that he made on the Loyal Address, in the course of which he committed himself to strengthening the union between Scotland and England throughout this Parliament? In this Parliament will he show an equal concern about strengthening the union with Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to reaffirm the Government's commitment to respect the democratically expressed wishes of the people of Northern Ireland. That has been our position for a long time and there is no change in that. At the same time, the people of Northern Ireland and I believe that the whole of the United Kingdom wants the present political talks to succeed. I understand the difficulties of the talks, but I hope that all Northern Ireland political leaders will bear in mind their responsibility to help to make the talks successful in the interests of all the people who live in Northern Ireland. It is those political leaders and those talks that offer the best prospect of a secure and prosperous future for Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom for all the people of Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Angela Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is fundamental that the basics of English are taught to children in schools? Is not that a vital part of the education policy of our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State? Does my right hon. Friend further agree that teaching the dialogue of soap operas will not raise the standards of education?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend speaks for many hon. Members and for many millions of people outside the House. The basics of education are clearly of fundamental importance. I suspect that the teaching of the classics is rather more valuable to children than the teaching of soap operas.

Soldiers' Deaths (Gulf War)

3.30 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to make a statement on the verdict of the coroner's inquest into the deaths by friendly fire in the Gulf war.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I am sure that the whole House would wish to join me in extending its deepest sympathy to the families of the soldiers who died in this tragic incident.

The inquest sitting in Oxford into the deaths of nine soldiers killed when their two Warriors were hit by two Maverick missiles fired by United States A10 aircraft has returned a verdict that each of them was killed unlawfully.

The Government and relevant legal authorities are considering as a matter of urgency the implication of the jury's findings and verdict. The Director of Public Prosecutions has asked to see all the relevant paper held by the coroner and the Ministry of Defence and will consider all the circumstances of the case. The MOD is providing all its papers to the DPP. I understand that the DPP has pointed out in a press release that there is no power to prosecute a foreign national in England or Wales for any offence of murder or manslaughter allegedly committed abroad.

I should also like to take this opportunity to respond to a number of points made during the inquest. I am aware that there has been some criticism with regard to the provision of information by the MOD to the families. I can assure the House and the families that our intention has always been to provide as full an account as possible. It was not until 10 July of last year that General Johnston of the United States Marine Corps wrote to our joint headquarters at High Wycombe with statements from the pilots answering points raised during our own inquiry. The MOD wrote to the families on 23 July as soon as it was possible to provide an authoritative account based on the findings of our board of inquiry.

On the question of procedures in future military operations, our board of inquiry recommended that standard operating procedures for close air support operations must in future include instructions that a grid reference or a latitude and longitude is included in mission briefs and that this is always acknowledged by the pilots. Work on that recommendation is in hand.

The board of inquiry also recommended that a study be initiated to identify a suitable air recognition system for future use. The Defence Research Agency is undertaking a research programme aimed at assessing short-term solutions as well as options for the longer term. We are exchanging information on possible solutions and maintaining close contact with the United States and other allies.

We are also working closely with our allies to develop new procedures and training to ensure that, in any future operations, the risks of troops firing on their comrades is minimised.

These events were a tragic incident in the Gulf war. We must try to learn what lessons we can from them. We must at the same time continue to pay tribute to the remarkable achievements of British, American and other coalition forces in the successful liberation of Kuwait, and salute the memory of all those who gave their lives, whatever the circumstances.

Mr. O'Neill: In thanking the Secretary of State, can I pay tribute to the persistence of purpose of the families of the service men who were so tragically killed on 26 February? Had it not been for their endeavours, yesterday's decision might not have been handed down. The verdict would seem to contradict the official report of the board of inquiry which stated:

"The Board did not establish whether the US Air Force personnel involved were at fault."

Does the Secretary of State recall that, in reply to an Adjournment debate on Fusilier Lee Thompson on 6 December 1991, his Minister of State said:

"It is of overriding importance, particularly in the case of injury or death, to establish the facts as quickly as possible. It is essential, therefore, that witnesses appearing before boards of inquiry should give their evidence in a full and frank manner."—[*Official Report*, 6 December 1991; Vol. 200, c. 590.]

What does the Secretary of State propose to do to guarantee that our American allies provide that evidence in the full and frank manner that his Minister of State demanded on 6 December?

Finally, what steps will the Secretary of State take to ensure that the families of British service personnel are never again subjected to the unnecessary exacerbation of their grief in the way that they have been subjected to it during the last few months?

Mr. Rifkind: On the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question, our desire is to ensure that any sensitive response to the families of service personnel who are killed or injured in any conflict should be provided as fully and as quickly as possible. Of course there are occasions during a conflict when it takes time, particularly if other allies are involved in the conflict, for the full information to be known, but that is our intention and we intend to see that we achieve it.

On the earlier part of the hon. Gentleman's question, the Ministry of Defence and the United Kingdom authorities have co-operated fully with the inquest with regard to the provision of any information or witnesses required by either the coroner or the inquest. It must be for the United States Government to come to a conclusion on what their response should be with regard to their own personnel.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the description of fire as "friendly" rests very uneasily with the verdict of unlawful killing? Will he confirm that one of the remarkable achievements of the coalition efforts in the Gulf war was the achievement of the military ends with the minimum of casualties? Was not a major factor the flying of up to 2,500 sorties a day? Although the whole House has the utmost sympathy for those British soldiers who died in the course of duty and, of course, for their bereaved families, and although I would not expect my right hon. and learned Friend to comment adversely on the coroner's verdict, in all the circumstances, would not a better verdict have been one of accidental death?

Mr. Rifkind: I first pay tribute to the personal contribution that my hon. Friend made when he volunteered for active service in the Gulf. That is something which I know has been widely acknowledged.

He was right to remind the House and the wider public of the enormous pressure under which all the allied pilots were operating at that time. Some 110,000 sorties were flown by allied pilots during the Gulf conflict. As my hon. Friend mentioned, that worked out at approximately 2,500 sorties a day. That is a factor which ought to be borne in mind.

Not only American pilots but pilots of all the coalition countries were acting under enormous pressure, and were exposed to the enormous risks of injury or death. Those who expose themselves to enormous danger in such circumstances ought to have that taken into account when tragic incidents—accidents, acknowledged by all as having been accidents—occasionally, regretfully, occur.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Two of the soldiers came from my constituency and one from that of my hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Miss Lynne). Is the Minister aware that we both know that the parents did feel that they were given misinformation and that they were struggling against secrecy? Will the Secretary of State also note that the jury's verdict was returned after the coroner had most clearly and specifically told it that a verdict of unlawful killing should be returned only if it thought that the action was not simply careless but reckless? While I accept all that has been said about the heat of battle and the pressures to which pilots are subjected, surely it would be right for our Government to ask the Americans now to have a full and open inquiry into the affair.

Mr. Rifkind: In the first instance, the implications of the jury's verdict are something for the legal authorities to consider. In answer to the earlier part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I certainly acknowledge that, in the first period after the Gulf war, there was some confusion and uncertainty as to precisely what had occurred on that day. The fullest information was available to the Ministry of Defence only at a later stage—in July, as I said earlier. As soon as we had acquired that information, we took steps to ensure that the families were informed. I accept, however, that it is desirable to try to find a more effective procedure for making information available at an earlier date and, if initial information turns out to be incorrect, special efforts must be made to correct it as soon as possible.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, despite the tragic and ghastly accident that led to the deaths of these fine young men, all British forces who served in the Gulf have reason to be grateful in particular to the pilots of A10s, whose outstanding work in destroying Iraqi tanks contributed to our casualties from enemy action being minimal?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with my hon. Friend. It was one of the remarkable features of the Gulf war that so few coalition forces sustained injury or death, and it is a tribute to the professionalism and expertise of British, American and other coalition pilots and other forces that that proved possible.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is it not possible to drop this absurb military euphemism, "friendly fire"? All fire that kills or injures is hostile, even if it comes from an allied weapon. What discussions have taken place between Ministry of Defence officials—representatives of the British Government—and the pilots concerned?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, our contacts have been with the United States Government, and it was as a result of those contacts that the United States Government sent the United Kingdom authorities full statements and affidavits from the pilots concerned, which were made available to the inquest.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): In view of the coverage in some of today's media, will my right hon. and learned Friend make it absolutely clear that there can be no question of bringing the American airmen to trial in Britain, not only because there is a world of difference between the accidental and mistaken killing of someone in the heat of battle and the deliberate or even reckless killing of the innocent in peacetime but because the only countries with jurisdiction to bring them to trial are the United States, which has granted them anonymity, and Iraq, where they would receive no justice?

Mr. Rifkind: I have heard what my hon. and learned Friend has said. He will be the first to appreciate that, in the first instance, these must be matters for the Director of Public Prosecutions. The DPP has already pointed out the lack of jurisdiction that exists and has emphasised the point to which my hon. and learned Friend has drawn attention.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the Secretary of State agree with me, as a Member representing one of the families that were bereaved as a result of this tragic incident, that we all accept that no litigation and no monetary compensation can bring back the young men or compensate in any way for the loss of their future? Does he also accept, however, that the families have gone through 15 months of tears, turmoil and trauma to reach even this stage?

If I recall rightly, at Question Time the Prime Minister said that he was not in a position to release any more information. Does that mean that there is further information to be made available? When the Secretary of State refers to the information that became available on 10 July, is he referring to this documentation sent to all the families, substantial sections of which were blanked out and which was not very helpful to the families concerned? The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that prosecutions could be forthcoming only in England and Wales. Was that deliberately to avoid the possibility of litigation in a Scottish context? Will the Secretary of State now agree to meet all the families concerned—preferably with the Prime Minister—as those families know how and when their youngsters were killed, but not yet why?

Mr. Rifkind: The reference to jurisdiction in England and Wales is a consequence of the fact that the inquest took place in England. However, I am not aware of any difference with regard to matters of jurisdiction even if similar events took place north of the border. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces has of course already met a number of the families. I fully appreciate the difficult and tense period that this has been for the families in question. We are all anxious to ensure that, if any new information that might become available was relevant to explaining the circumstances in which their relatives lost their lives, that information should be made available to them. However, that will have to be judged in the light of any information that might arise. We are considering the evidence that was submitted to the inquest

[Mr. Rifkind]

to see whether it gives rise to the need for any further examination, and we will respond if it turns out that that is justified.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Bearing in mind that some of the service men killed were Scots, my right hon. and learned Friend will recognise the feeling that exists in Scotland about the matter. However, we also hope that he will take a balanced view and recognise that there are no easy areas in the desert to identify one's position; that it is difficult in the desert in a fast-moving war when movement is rapid, and that the pilots operated under enormous stress. The operation of so many sorties a day in battle conditions are the circumstances in which mistakes can and will occur. It is nonsense for anyone to pretend afterwards that humans do not make errors, because they do. That is particularly true in the stress of battle conditions. Will my right hon. and learned Friend also bear it in mind that the A10s were responsible for the massive destruction of Iraqi armour which would have caused irreparable damage to our troops if it had made contact with them?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. Obviously the success of the coalition in achieving not just air superiority but air supremacy had a very material impact on our ability to win the Gulf war and on the minimising of casualties when that war entered its final phase.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that, from the very time that the bereaved families learned that their beloved sons had died, they were concerned about the lack of sensitivity and information and the belief that there was a cover-up and that the truth was not being told? Should such tragedies ever occur in future, I hope that we will have learnt that lesson.

Would it not be useful if the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State told the American authorities that, although the House fully supported the war and the overwhelming majority of British people fully supported a justified war against criminal aggression, it would be unfortunate if the alliance built up at that time was marred as a result of a lack of American co-operation in telling the truth about what actually occurred? I hope that our American allies will be told that.

Mr. Rifkind: I do not believe that the alliance is being marred, or that there has been a failure to tell the truth. It is important to stress those points. Of course, it may prove impossible to understand exactly the detailed circumstances that led to the tragic deaths of those soldiers. What happens in the midst of such conflicts can sometimes be very difficult to establish with precise detail at a later stage. However, we have no reason to believe that there has been any intent to withhold legitimate information or to do anything unreasonable. It is important that that point should be emphasised.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, while our hearts go out to the families of the young soldiers, the hounding of the two American airmen and, by extension, the American air force, ought to stop? They risked their lives to save the lives of tens of thousands of ground troops, including many thousands of British lives that were potentially at risk.

In welcoming the various remarks of my right hon. and learned Friend about reconsidering standard operating procedures, may I ask whether he accepts that there is no way of avoiding accidents completely? Indeed, 15 Royal Marines were killed at Suez—a much smaller operation—as a result of an accident involving a British aircraft; and 110 British soldiers were killed by a Czech pilot on Salisbury plain during the second world war in a single accident. No one suggested that those people should be tried for manslaughter.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, my hon. Friend is entirely correct in reminding the House that in almost every example of war or conflict there have been tragic incidents of that kind. He is right also to emphasise the invaluable contribution that was made by American pilots and by pilots of all the countries of the coalition to ensuring an extraordinarily successful outcome to the Gulf war.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does it not show hypocrisy and double standards that, not so long ago, the Bush Administration were demanding that the two Libyans go to America and stand trial, and yet when the British people—*[Interruption.]* I thought that that would provoke some comments from the Tories. Whereas on the other hand, when the British people and the parents are demanding the same treatment for those Americans, this tawdry Government act like Bush's poodle.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is descending to a new level of repugnance in seeking to draw any comparison between an act of terrorism which led to the loss of lives of hundreds of people on a civil airliner and a tragic incident by courageous pilots in the middle of the Gulf war.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We will now move on. That matter has had a very good airing.

Points of Order

3.50 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I rise to ask whether you have received any requests from Ministers for a statement on the Government's intentions in respect of the pension cuts of 20,000 Maxwell pensioners. I believe that Parliament and the country have a right to know the Government's attitude to the return by the banks of stolen fund assets, to the lifebelt idea, to ensuring that the trustees can continue to pursue those funds, and to the underwriting by the Government of pensions in payment if there has been culpability on the part of the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation or negligence on the part of the Department of Social Security in implementing the Social Security Act 1990. In view of the Government's silence on the matter for the past four weeks, has there been any such statement? If not, will you use your good offices to try to secure one?

Madam Speaker: I have had no request from a Minister to make a statement. I hope that the House understands that the Speaker does not indicate to Ministers or to any Government Department when a statement should be made. It is, rather, the other way round. The hon. Gentleman must try to find other means of pursuing his claims.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have given notice of my point of order to you, the Leader of the House and the Foreign Office. You may recall that the House was concerned about what is known as the consolidated text of the treaty of Rome. I raised it at business questions on Thursday and received a reply from the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which is important. It reads:

"It is clear how the Treaty on European Union is intended to amend the Treaty of Rome when those two documents are read against each other. For this reason the Government have not prepared any consolidated version for their own use, nor are they yet preparing such a version for publication. An official version of the consolidated text of the Treaty of Rome incorporating the Treaty on European Union will be published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Community in due course. That will be the official text of the Treaty. The Government intend to wait for the Community's text to be finalised, and for the Treaty to enter into force, before publishing their own consolidated version."

You will agree, Madam Speaker, that some important matters arise from that. We will have a motion tomorrow —I am sorry, it is a Bill, which is little more than a motion —to approve a treaty, CM 1934, of more than 100 pages, which amends yet another existing treaty of more than 300 pages, to produce a third treaty, treaty C, through fertilisation and through progeny. We therefore have to decide on Thursday whether treaty C, from the point of view of the House, will emerge. However, on their own admission, the Government, even for the purposes of Privy Councillors protecting the realm, let alone for the House, do not have even for themselves a copy of that third treaty.

Furthermore, it is clear from the text of the letter which I have quoted and which is now in the Library that there will be two versions of the said treaty, even after it may have had Royal Assent from the House and even after it has come into effect—one from the official office of the Communities and one apparently from Her Majesty's Government. Which text will the Court of the European Communities depend on? Which version of either of those phantom treaties will we be invited to approve on Thursday? I put it to you, Madam Speaker, that three questions arise.

Is it not a breach of the practice and custom of the House for Her Majesty's Government not to publish prior to effective assent in principle the known text of a draft treaty which is likely to become a fundamental component of the effective constitution of the nation? Secondly, is it not a major breach of duty that Her Majesty's Ministers have not, even in their role as Privy Councillors, taken steps to protect the realm by furnishing themselves with this phantom text? Thirdly, in consequence of these matters, should not the debate on the Second Reading of the Bill be postponed until the text of the third treaty becomes a printed and published reality? Should not the Second Reading of the approving Bill be undertaken only after the public, Members of Parliament and perhaps Committees of the House have had the time to read, scrutinise and assess its implications and consequences?

Madam Speaker: I am grateful, first of all, to the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in giving me notice of his point of order. I have, of course, seen the letter from the Minister of State which refers to the relationship between the treaty on European union and the treaty of Rome. It is for the hon. Gentleman to decide whether he considers it premature for the European Communities (Amendment) Bill to be proceeded with ahead of the preparation of a consolidated version of the treaties. That may well affect how he votes on Thursday.

I am satisfied—I have had to satisfy myself—that the Bill before us tomorrow is perfectly in order. Whether it should be passed is a matter for the House, not for me. The Bill that we shall debate tomorrow is perfectly in order.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will be aware that this morning the Director of Public Prosecutions announced that she proposed to take no action on any of the 91 complaints against officers of the West Midlands police force or on any of the 11 complaints about misappropriation of funds from police sources. The matter has obvious implications for the police as a whole. It is clearly a green light to officers planning misbehaviour. Have you had notice from the Attorney-General, in view of the obvious implications for the police and public confidence in them, that he intends to come to the House to offer a statement on the subject?

Madam Speaker: No, I have had no such indication.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that, during the run-up to the general election, all of us who are sitting Members received a letter from the then Speaker and the Serjeant at Arms about the use of House of Commons facilities, such as notepaper and stationery. I think that they were sensible rules, because such facilities clearly give to an incumbent Member a distinct advantage over candidates from other parties. Therefore, it is important that those rules are reinforced regularly. On this occasion, I look to you to make sure that the House is fully aware of those rules and that they are abided by on future occasions.

I have in my possession a letter sent by one hon. Member. I have given her notice that I intended to raise

[Mr. Derek Fatchett]

this point of order this afternoon. The letter appears to violate those rules. The hon. Member in question is the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock). The letter is dated 7 April—two days before the general election. At the top it says:

"From Mrs. Elizabeth J. Peacock JP MP, Member of Parliament, Batley and Spen"

In the right-hand corner, the letter heading says:

"House of Commons, London SW1A OAA",

and it lists some telephone numbers. At the bottom, the letter is signed by "Elizabeth J. Peacock".

I think that that is probably a violation of the excellent guidance given by the previous Speaker, and I look to you to safeguard the constitutional rights of this Chamber and of the facilities here.

Madam Speaker: I certainly intend to do so, and I remember the guidance so wisely given to us. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman furnishes that information to the Serjeant at Arms.

Mr. Speaker Weatherill (Retirement)

Motion made and Question proposed,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying Her Majesty that she will be most graciously pleased to confer some signal mark of her Royal Favour upon the Right honourable Bernard Weatherill for his eminent services during the important period in which with such distinguished ability and dignity he presided in the Chair of this House. *—[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

3.59 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is this matter debatable?

Madam Speaker: Yes. It is usually a procedural motion, but it is debatable. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to speak?

Mr. Skinner: I shall not take long. This motion says that we are asking the Queen for a Royal favour. I have no intention of asking the Queen for any favours. I believe that the Queen should do her subjects a favour and start paying taxes.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a long-standing Member of this House. He knows full well that we do not debate the Queen, her activities or our attitude towards the Queen in the House. This motion requests the Queen to confer an honour on our former Speaker. It refers to the Speaker and not to the Queen, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will carry out the procedures that have been laid down in this House for a long time.

Mr. Skinner: I realise that what you say is absolutely correct and I shall come to do that matter, I just mentioned the Royal favour bit en passant—and that is the only favour I shall give to the Maastricht mob this week.

What is this favour? Will it be a place in the House of Lords? If it is, I do not want to support it. Normally, I do not have a say in the matter for anyone who gets a place in the House of Lords, because they are nominated in some list. There will be a few more nominated in a bit—Norman Tebbit, the Countess of Finchley and all the rest of them.

On this occasion, when I am given a possible chance of voting against sending someone to the House of Lords, I shall seize it with both hands. So I am looking for a teller to join me and to vote against the motion. If the favour means a place in the House of Lords, this is one of the rare occasions that we have a chance to say no.

I am against the House of Lords. I believe in a classless society. The Prime Minister is always rabbiting on about a classless society, but I want to carry it out. I do not believe in perpetuating the other place and adding to its number.

What is more, I do not know why Bernard Weatherill wants the job. It astounds me. The man had everything going for him when he was Speaker of the House of Commons. He often used to tell us that he had a little thimble in his pocket, and that he would use it when he finished. I am not against him doing that. He could use his thimble to undo all the robes. He could also use it for all those new Conservative Members of Parliament who want penguin suits, or he could make a few grey suits for those who want to be clones of the Prime Minister. Why does he need to go to the Lords?

Of course, it might not be the Lords, it might be money —some extra cash. We are talking about a society where

more than 3 million people are on the scrap heap—that pile of human misery known as the dole queue. We live in a society where 80,000 people are losing their homes. Why should we dole out favours to someone who is doing all right?

I do not want any favours when I have done. I hope to Christ that no one will nominate me for anything, because I shall turn it down.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): The hon. Gentleman is suffering from "knight starvation".

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman has been given a favour. He became a knight like nearly all the rest of the Tories. They go begging on hands and knees to the Prime Minister of the day. They should be given a pair of knee pads to enable them to crawl.

If my hon. Friends agree with me, they will be against the House of Lords. We once had a conference decision, when the block vote was flavour of the month, that resulted in 6 million votes, against 6,000, in favour of abolishing the House of Lords. If my hon. Friends join me, we will have a vote. I suspect that the House of Lords is what the royal favour is all about.

We have heard a lot of talk about the classless society, the honours system and elitism. Here is a chance for some Labour Members to practise those ideas. I say no to the motion.

4.5 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): This House has developed its long commitment to free speech to such an extent that, when we listen to highly individual and colourful characters, such as my good friend, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), we enjoy not only their colourful speeches but their commitment to the art of personal propaganda. That does not mean that we should always appear to be, whatever our real reasons, a graceless and slightly unforgiving and ungrateful Assembly.

I have served in this House for many years, and I have had the privilege to serve under many Speakers. We would be wrong to allow the interesting gesture of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover to be recorded as though we were in some way seeking to detract from the commitment and hard work of Mr. Bernard Weatherill. During his Speakership, many of us learned to appreciate not only his honesty and kindness, but his real concern for Back-Bench Members, and not just for those powerful Members on the Front Bench, either above or below the Gangway.

I think that it is important that the House of Commons should, from time to time, thank those of its own who care for its traditions—not only those associated with the pomp and ceremony but the really important ones concerning the protection of free speech and the rights and privileges of the people of the United Kingdom.

I should like to place on record not only my appreciation of Mr. Bernard Weatherill, but my real thanks for the way in which, over many years, he sought above all to protect the interests of individual Members of Parliament. However the motion is expressed on the Order Paper, I hope that the House will record its appreciation of the many years of loyal, kind and heartfelt warmth of service that he showed to hon. Members.

4.8 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): There is no objection on my part to recording our appreciation of the work of Bernard Weatherill as Speaker. I do not mind doing that at all. I object to the idea that a job must, for some reason, be given an added favour. I should have thought that the job of Speaker itself, which many people regard as the accolade of their political life, is sufficient reward. I am opposed to the idea that, because a person achieves a certain position, he should necessarily receive a royal favour.

Between 3,000 and 4,000 people work in the Palace of Westminster, and many of them do not receive anything like the prominence or accolades that the Speaker receives, but they are necessary to the functioning of this place. Last night, when the Adjournment debate started before 10.30 pm, those who receive the lowest wages in the Palace—not the £70,000-plus a year earned by the Speaker—were not allowed to travel home in a taxi because that is the rule. The Speaker receives a car, and rightly so. I do not object to that. However, the women who work here were sent home from this place, out on to the streets of London, to get home as best they could, late at night. They are not provided with a taxi if the Adjournment debate starts before 10.30 pm.

When we talk about the teamwork that is required to keep this place going, let us bear in mind the working men and women here who receive salaries and wages that are trivial compared with the pay received by the Speaker. Indeed, one might say that the Speaker, as the chairman or chairwoman over our proceedings, receives sufficient recognition by being elected by hon. Members. That honour should be recognised as such.

The idea that a royal favour automatically follows the Speaker's term of office should be scrapped. We can go a little way down the road of scrapping that aspect of the pomp and circumstance by voting against the motion. I have no doubt that many hon. Members thought that the motion would be passed in a routine way, but it gives us a chance to express our view now.

I do not expect many hon. Members to be in the No Lobby. If we are to change the panoply of this pompous institution, let us make a start now by calling a Division. I assure the House that, even if nobody is in the No Lobby, there will be two tellers for the Noes. As I say, it would be a start—*[Interruption.]* I do not know what the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) is muttering. As a Tory, if he wants to support the Prime Minister, he has a chance to support us by voting in favour of a classless society.

4.11 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): This is a singularly ungracious and churlish way in which to mark the long and distinguished service of your predecessor, Madam Speaker. When tributes were paid to Speaker Weatherill at the end of the last Parliament, they met with the genuine and deserved approval of hon. Members in all parts of the House. When the traditional honour—some of us believe in tradition—is being offered to a man who has served the House with impeccable rectitude for many years, it is churlish, undignified, mean, mean-spirited and petty-minded in the extreme that it should be opposed by the sort of speeches that we have heard this afternoon.

4.12 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) made it absolutely clear why he would be voting against the motion, and explained that in no way did he intend any disrespect to the previous Speaker. As the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) said, hon. Members in all parts of the House paid tribute to Speaker Weatherill. They were sincere tributes, for we hold him in the highest respect and affection.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover made an important point. Many of us have been in talks with people from eastern Europe in which they have explained how they are establishing new democracies. When we explain the way in which democracy works in Britain, they are, generally speaking, impressed—until we describe how the House of Lords works, its powers and the way in which its members are selected. There is no question of any of the newly emerging democracies imitating our upper House.

This is the first time for many years that we have a chance to make a gesture. We have an opportunity to say that the House of Lords is an affront to the democratic system and must be reformed. In joining my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover in the No Lobby, I and others who may be in that Lobby mean absolutely no disrespect to the previous Speaker, whom we hold in the highest regard.

4.14 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I wish at the outset to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). It is wondrous to watch him in action. I am surprised that he spotted this occasion and has brought the matter to the attention of the House. I commend new Members on both sides to study carefully the actions of my hon. Friend. They will learn a great deal at his knee.

Like other hon. Members, I have great regard and esteem for Bernard Weatherill and everything that he did when he was in the House. I am loth to deprive him of anything that he would want having left this place, if he approves of it and sees it as a reward. Although I am reluctant to support my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover, I shall do so on the following ground alone: the unfortunate way in which the motion is termed.

We should have the right to confer a commendation or favour on one of our colleagues who has done a great service to the House. It seems most unfortunate that the only way in which we can do so is to go to the Queen and ask that a royal favour be conferred on Speaker Weatherill, who then has to go to the House of Lords, which is supposed to be this country's great bastion of privilege and class traditions. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has now shown that it is time that the House started to look at how we could confer some form of favour or commendation on any one of our colleagues whom we feel is suitable for such an honour. That could be people who sit in the House or serve in the Refreshment Department or elsewhere. I suggest something like a Commons medal.

Whatever else my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has done, he has shown us today that we must keep our eyes open, because we never know what will be slipped through on the Order Paper.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 247, Noes 15.

Division No. 16] **[4.16 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bermingham, Gerald
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boateng, Paul
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Butler, Peter
Cann, James
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Enright, Derek
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'l'rdshire)*
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNamara, Kevin

Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudie, George
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speed, Keith
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Straw, Jack
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaz, Keith
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Wicks, Malcolm
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Ainger, Nicholas
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bennett, Andrew F.
Boyce, Jimmy
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cohen, Harry
Flynn, Paul
Madden, Max
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mullin, Chris
Redmond, Martin
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying Her Majesty that she will be most graciously pleased to confer some signal mark of her Royal Favour upon the Right honourable Bernard Weatherill for his eminent services during the important period in which with such distinguished ability and dignity he presided in the Chair of this House.

Adjournment (Spring)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising on Friday 22nd May, do adjourn until Tuesday 2nd June.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

4.26 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I want to raise an issue of serious, widespread and growing concern about which this House plainly deserves an oral ministerial statement before the recess. The issue is the Government's refusal to set any date by which Operation Container—the scheme for keeping prisoners in police cells—will be discontinued. We still await even the announcement of a timetable for reducing the huge number of prisoners now held in police stations.

Operation Container came into being specifically to deal with the shortage of prison accommodation in the Greater Manchester area caused by the destruction of Strangeways prison more than two years ago. The House will recall that Strangeways, built in the Victorian era and destroyed in the riot of April 1990, was seriously overcrowded, even in 19th-century terms, when the riot took place.

I saw the conditions in Strangeways, before the disturbances, on a visit to discuss with senior staff the problems caused by the detention there of prisoners who were mentally ill but for whom no accommodation was available in more appropriate places of detention. There were then about 1,700 prisoners in Strangeways; today there are still 1,638 prisoners held in police stations under Operation Container. Of that total, 233 are held in cells in 23 police stations in Greater Manchester. That number has hardly changed since last November and, despite the daunting stress imposed on our police service by crime figures for which any previous Government would have been heavily censured, it shows no sign of decreasing.

Greater Manchester police are not alone in having to bear the extra burden of acting as gaolers. Other police forces, from Devon and Cornwall to Northumbria and from East Sussex to Cumbria, have also become part of the prison system. In all, 39 police forces are participating in the operation. The full list was given in a priority written reply that I received from the Minister with responsibility for prisons on 11 May, and the cost of Operation Container is both enormous and still growing. Perhaps the Leader of the House could let the House know the total cost to date when he winds up the debate.

I shall be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman can also let the House know whether the new Home Secretary will be accepting the Greater Manchester police authority's urgent request for a meeting with him to discuss its concerns about Operation Container. A letter that I received this morning from Mr. R. C. Rees, clerk to the Greater Manchester police authority, states that no effective action has been taken to provide temporary accommodation in, for example, military camps for the prisoners now held in police cells, and that, in his police authority's view, the Home Office is clearly in breach of its duty under the Prison Act 1952 to provide prisons.

The letter goes on:

"The Police Authority is also of the view that this failure on the part of the Home Office, and the consequent necessity for the Police Authority to provide accommodation in police cells, is having a deleterious effect on the policing of Greater

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

Manchester, in that many Police Officers are being compelled to act as Prison Warders instead of protecting the community from crime".

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): There is also increasing anecdotal evidence in Greater Manchester that, on occasion, there are no empty police cells and that, for that reason, arrests that would be made in other circumstances are not being made.

Mr. Morris: I accept that important point and pay warm tribute to the long, sustained and extremely well-informed contribution my hon. Friend has made to discussion of this important issue.

The letter from the clerk to the Greater Manchester police authority continues:

"It is not yet too late to remedy the situation, even though the Police Authority is actively considering instituting formal legal proceedings against the Home Secretary, unless adequate assurances are given."

Surely that merits an oral statement by the Home Secretary before the recess?

The detention of remand or sentenced prisoners in police stations—including many in areas of acute deprivation and social stress—is manifestly unacceptable. The position is now deeply serious and the ending of Operation Container is a compelling priority. That is not only my view. In his reply to me on 11 May, the Minister said that the problem of using police stations for prisoners was

"regarded as extremely serious and the task of bringing it to an end . . . a top priority".

The reply went on:

"Neither I, nor my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, regard the detention of remand or sentenced prisoners in police cells as acceptable either for the prisoners or the police."—[*Official Report*, 11 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 20.]

Those statements make the Minister's inability to set a date by which Operation Container will end—or even to announce a timetable for reducing the number of prisoners held in police stations—all the more worrying for people in Greater Manchester and elsewhere who know that their police forces, with crime figures as they are now, have more than enough to do without adding to their already heavy burdens.

Notwithstanding the best endeavours of police officers, can security be as good in police stations as it is in prisons? Are the Government satisfied that public safety is nowhere at risk from the long-term detention of prisoners in police stations? Those are the questions put to me, day by day, by my constituents.

An operation that was described as "temporary" after the Strangeways riot has now come to look more and more permanent. Indeed, the overall position today is worse than when the Strangeways riot occurred, as police authorities are placed in the de facto position of running a prison service by reason of the Home Office default. Police officers are losing their rest days, police stations are changing their character and, in fact, the fundamental purpose of the police service is undergoing extra-statutory change as it takes on duties it was never meant to discharge.

I went recently to Brownley road police station in my constituency, where four prisoners were being held. They cannot have a shower there, so they have to be transported under escort from the police station for a shower. Exercise and catering provision are other difficult problems, quite apart from the general effect on the work of dedicated officers in a very busy police station of turning it into a gaol for prisoners, some of whom have completed their entire sentences in police cells.

Councillor Stephen Murphy, chairman of the Greater Manchester police authority, has spoken with admirable restraint of a "real deterioration in policing" in consequence of Operation Container and of his disquiet that costs of well over £3 million incurred in the investigation, for prosecution purposes, of incidents both during and after the disturbances at Strangeways have not been met by the Home Office. The chairman points out that many police officers have been involved in this work. Yet the Home Office refuses to provide additional finances to cover the authority's costs. This also is unacceptable, not least to Greater Manchester's poll tax payers. Why should they have to suffer this imposition?

I am sure that the Leader of the House will accept that the problems created by Operation Container constitute a very important matter for Greater Manchester, the north-west and for the country as a whole. There is no party animus locally about the extreme urgency of the need now to have the problems resolved. That can only be assisted by an early meeting between the Home Secretary and those who have to deal with these problems at the sharp end of Operation Container. I ask the Leader of the House for a helpful reply when he responds to the debate.

4.37 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-west): I listened with great interest to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), because I have a prison in my constituency. I am happy to say that it is an extremely good and modern establishment. I know that the House always listens with the keenest interest to the right hon. Gentleman, because he renders a great service to this place. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will pay attention to the right hon. Gentleman's contribution.

Before the House rises for the spring Adjournment, I want to talk about the problems of woodlands in Britain generally and in Cambridgeshire in particular. It is a matter of great importance to all who value our heritage and want to preserve the best in our environment.

I cite first Brampton wood in Cambridgeshire, which comprises 330 acres of woodland on the edge of my constituency. It is primarily in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Many people in both of our constituencies are worried about the wood's future, and we have been inundated, not surprisingly, with correspondence.

I can best describe the wood by using the words of one of my constituents, Mrs. Pamela Timbrell. She wrote that there

"are a wide range of wild flowers—some endangered—a diverse collection of beautiful native trees, squirrels and species of deer in a truly wild and natural setting. It is indeed a place of fragile and magical beauty."

Another of my constituents, Mr. Barry Dickerson, the county recorder of lepidoptera, which for the benefit of old Etonians means that he is the recorder of butterflies and moths, has recorded 515 different species of butterflies and moths in Brampton wood.

The wood is owned by the Ministry of Defence. It has been found to be surplus to its requirements, and in line

with its normal policy it is selling it by competitive tender to the highest bidder, in order, not unnaturally, to obtain the best return for the taxpayer.

The people of Cambridgeshire have always supported the Ministry of Defence presence in their county. Quite sensibly, we have tolerated aircraft noise and so on, because we know the importance of the MOD activities to the defence of the realm. Cambridgeshire has a great history of defence of this country.

The future of the wood after its sale is uncertain. Such woodlands cannot just be left; they have to be managed if they are to retain their beauty and provide enjoyment for nature lovers throughout the county and the country. The wood is designated as a site of special scientific interest, but that does not ensure that it will be properly managed. After all, I understand that 2,000 acres of SSSIs have been damaged during the past 12 months. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Forestry Commission cannot compel the appropriate management of woodlands.

The Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust is keen to buy the wood. It would preserve it, look after it, and ensure that it is developed in the best possible way, preserving the flora and fauna inside it. However, the trust needs time. The MOD should, if possible, sell the wood to the trust. Will the MOD at least give the trust time to submit a suitably competitive bid, which it wants and intends to do? Alternatively, will the MOD give time to allow suitable safeguards to be put in place to preserve that beautiful wood?

We now have a new heritage Ministry. I am not quite sure what it does, but I should not be surprised if it were extremely interested in this problem. The Secretary of State for National Heritage should become involved in such issues. Of course, other Ministries are involved. The Department of the Environment must be interested, if the environment means anything. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food should be interested because it has forestry responsibilities. I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to get those Ministries to work together rather than in separate penny packets, so that we can save something that is really worth while in our society. I know that both my right hon. Friend and our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister take the problem seriously.

I want to discuss the slightly broader issue, because British woodlands as a whole are at risk. I am sure that many hon. Members will have read the *Observer* supplement last Sunday. It certainly made stark reading. It is only a short while before the great Rio summit on the environment is held. It is ironic that, during the past 50 years, Amazonia—the place we are always told has devastated its forests—lost 10 per cent. of its forests, yet over the same period Britain lost 45 per cent. If those figures are true, they are very stark. It is worrying for the British environment and for a country that has been so notable for its woodlands and its forests.

It is also ironic that the Government subsidise new afforestation where people plant dreary conifers, which do not attract wildlife. They certainly do not create the woods that we want in our beloved country. While providing subsidies for those boring conifers, the Government run the risk of destroying existing much better, much more beautiful and much more lush woodland through the highest-bidder policy that the MOD is pursuing.

The matter is urgent, both nationally and locally. It is no good making lots of money, having wonderful machinery and new technology and creating wealth if, in the process, there is not a countryside in which it is worth living. I am sure that the Government would not wish to be known as an Administration who appreciate the price of everything, but the value of nothing.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Many right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. I hope that any hon. Members who are fortunate to catch my eye in the early part of the debate will take that into consideration. It is only a three-hour debate, and I wish to call as many hon. Members as possible.

4.45 pm

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I know that, as this is my maiden speech, I shall be treated with courtesy and gracious listening, but it is none the less a fairly daunting experience. I feel very privileged to be a Member of the House. Indeed, I believe that all of us, being Members, are so privileged. I suspect that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would agree that in the light of that privilege and that honour, our behaviour, countenance and manner should reflect that.

I represent Rochdale and I realise that I have a very hard act to follow. My predecessor, Sir Cyril Smith, was a character in his own right. Loved by most—not all, but most—he was a tireless worker for his constituents. He is outspoken and he never hesitates to say what he thinks or believes. Before he came to the House in the famous 1972 by-election, he had been councillor, alderman and mayor of Rochdale. His service to his beloved Rochdale spans some 40 years. I know that the House will wish him a long and happy retirement. I, for one, owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

The Rochdale constituency comprises the old county borough of Rochdale. Within 15 minutes, we can be out of the township into the hills or on to the moors, yet it still embraces commerce, industry and all the inner-town facilities. Rochdale has a proud history. It was a great textile town, but sadly that is fading, although new industries are growing and thousands of small businesses now make a valuable contribution to our economy. Rochdale also has great companies with worldwide reputations.

Regrettably, however, unemployment is still above the regional average. While Rochdale does not have people sleeping out in cardboard boxes to any great extent, homelessness is still a serious problem and a social evil.

John Bright and Gracie Fields are famous Rochdalians. The Co-operative Movement was founded in Rochdale, as was the Workers Educational Association. In 1994, when it is reasonable to expect that I shall still be the town's Member of Parliament, Rochdale will celebrate some great events—the 800th anniversary of Rochdale parish church, the 150th anniversary of the Co-op, the centenary of the Rochdale canal and the centenary of the children's Moorland home. People, however, are the great wealth of Rochdale—its population, its voluntary organisations and its societies. Drama, music, church, community—just name it and we have it.

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We are a close-knit community, which is why the death of Conrad Cole, a young soldier from Rochdale, in the so-called friendly fire incident has affected Rochdale greatly. It does not seem likely that, under international law, the pilots can be extradited. Because of that, I urge the Government to use their special relationship with the United States to press for a further and fuller inquiry and for the results to be released to the parents and all interested parties.

It is perhaps not surprising that Rochdale has always been concerned about the people within its community. It has been deeply involved in the issue of community care. The first local authority home for the elderly was opened in 1950, the family group homes by 1960 and schemes to help pensioners with decorating and gardening were introduced in 1963. In the 1960s, a youth-helps-elderly scheme was pioneered at a time of severe weather conditions. It is therefore wholly appropriate, I hope, that my maiden speech as Member of Parliament for Rochdale should be concerned with community care. Therefore, I ask that before the House adjourns we should debate the pressing issue of community care.

I grew up in a disabled persons' home, as my mother was in charge of it. A lot of my friends, of course, were disabled. One particular friend and I used to go all over the place together. She was 16 and I was 11 when we arrived there, but what used to make me so angry was that when we were out together people frequently asked me questions and never talked to her first, even though she was five years older. I realised very quickly the sort of discrimination that people with disabilities have to suffer. I was determined to help to change that, not only for disabled people but for everyone, to create an equal and caring society.

I should like to ask: where is the vision, where is the idealism, where is the hope? They are certainly not there for the elderly, or for disabled people, or for the mentally ill, or for the homeless, or for those with learning difficulties. Care in the community was supposed to be the great hope, but what has happened to it? I shall tell hon. Members. It is grossly underfunded and has not been properly thought through. I believe very strongly that community care is the right way forward, but not in the way that it is operating at the moment in many places throughout the country. If we are not careful, more and more people will be left to roam the streets. More and more people will be placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, with nothing to do all day. More people will be put into flats and bed-sits, without the proper back-up facilities. It is happening already.

We have a very good example of what happened when the large mental institutions were closed. Quite a lot of the inmates were dumped out, to fend for themselves. Many of them can still be seen wandering the streets and sleeping rough. We must not let that continue. We must certainly not let it happen again.

Community care has to be provided with proper resources. That money has to be ring-fenced to stop local councils being able to squander it on pet projects. We need to create a comprehensive disability income scheme so that people with disabilities can be given real financial freedom. We need also to create a new carers benefit that recognises the essential role that carers play in enabling people to stay within the community. We need to take positive action to get people off the streets and into real homes of their own. Our aim should be to reduce homelessness by at least 50 per cent. in the next four years.

All the groups of people I have mentioned have to be treated with dignity and respect. For too long they have been ignored; for too long they have been swept to one side; and for too long they have been the poor relations. As a Member of Parliament, I hope to make my contribution to improved community care and I am happy that my maiden speech should have been devoted to that cause.

4.53 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): We have just heard a gracious and elegant speech, delivered with passion and compassion by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Miss Lynne). It is not surprising that we should hear such a speech from the hon. Lady because Rochdale produced, as she mentioned, Gracie Fields, who embodied the big-heartedness of that area. I hope that the hon. Lady will enjoy her stay in the House. I am sure that she will enjoy the same friendship that her predecessor, Sir Cyril Smith, who was a large and lovely personality, enjoyed here. I echo what she said about the need to look after the people of this country.

I urge the House not to adjourn, because of the threatened bed closures in my constituency of North Down in the Bangor hospital, the Ulster hospital and the Ards hospital. I denounce the Eastern health board's proposals to cut almost 100 hospital beds in the North Down area. Such bed closures will inevitably have an adverse effect on patient care in the area. There is no doubt whatsoever that waiting lists, which already are intolerably long, will grow longer still.

The board has announced that there will be consultations about the closures, but such talks—I speak from many years' experience of statements by the Eastern health board in the past—will, in my opinion, be a sham. They will be a cosmetic exercise to give a semblance of democracy to decisions already made to cut essential hospital beds—cuts which, if implemented, will clearly be detrimental to the people of North Down.

Every year, the North Down and Ards unit of management has imposed excessive expenditure cuts on hospital and social services in the North Down area. The present proposals are the result of a programme imposed on the unit by the Eastern health board to cut expenditure on hospital services by a further £1 million. I have charged the board with discrimination against the people of my constituency and elsewhere in the Eastern health board area. That area takes in the city of Belfast, which receives more than its fair share of money, in proportion to the population of Belfast, the number of hospital beds available in Belfast and the total expenditure of the Eastern health board on the city of Belfast.

I do not blame the Belfast hospitals for seeking to obtain as much money as possible. Money spent on patients is money well spent. The fact is, however, that money is being drawn away from the rest of the Eastern health board area to the city of Belfast. Therefore, I call for Belfast to be hived off from the Eastern health board area and established as a separate entity, because the cost of hospital beds in the Ulster and Bangor hospitals is lower than the cost of hospital beds in the Royal Victoria

hospital or the City hospital, Belfast. I am shocked by the cuts which it has been decided to make in my constituency of North Down.

The whole of a medical ward in Bangor hospital is to be closed. That ward consists of 24 beds. Sadly, patients who need operations will have to wait far longer for them. That makes a mockery of the claim that the national health service is being organised for the benefit of patients. The closure of a whole medical ward will create appalling difficulties for Bangor. The population consists of 70,000 men, women and children. It deserves to have a fully operational hospital with a casualty department. Instead, the Eastern health board cuts, cuts and cuts again. I have warned my constituents that, in due course, despite assurances from the Eastern health board to the contrary, the board will seek to close the Bangor hospital completely.

It is an indictment of the undemocratic bureaucracy that governs Northern Ireland that such proposals can be made with no reference to the elected representatives of the Ulster people. The board is composed of people who were appointed by the Minister and who, therefore, are minions of the Government. Representatives of the press are not admitted to meetings and do not hear the deliberations of the Eastern health board. We find out what is happening by rumour; then, eventually, a statement is made to the effect that the proposal will be implemented following discussions.

The Ulster hospital's orthopaedic ward, with 20 beds, is to be closed. The Ards hospital will lose 52 beds. All those closures will create suffering for patients and relatives, and nurses and other staff will inevitably lose their jobs.

I call on the Government to ensure that the proposed bed closures in the North Down and Ards area are not implemented within the next few months as proposed but postponed until the proposals are fully examined and discussed by the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland. That can be done effectively only by means of a Northern Ireland Select Committee, which could cross-examine health board officials and other witnesses. I have been pressing for the appointment of a Select Committee for some time and I now repeat that demand for the restoration of democracy to the people of Northern Ireland.

If my fair and reasonable demand for the appointment of a Select Committee is still refused, I call on the Government to guarantee to the people of my constituency that the Eastern health board proposals will be postponed until the creation of another Northern Ireland Assembly. We understand from the discussions that have taken place over the past few months that there is a very reasonable prospect of a Northern Ireland assembly being established. The health board's proposals are an ideal matter for such an assembly to discuss, and I do not think that a decision should be made in advance of its creation.

In the name of my constituents, in the name of justice and in the name of community care, I urge the Government to ensure that the undemocratic bureaucratic Eastern health board does not proceed with the proposed hospital bed closures, which would create an appalling state of affairs in my constituency of North Down.

5.2 pm

Ms. Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to make my maiden speech to the House. I begin by congratulating you on your election to your new post—a tribute to your ability and of most welcome assistance to new and inexperienced Members like myself.

I shall refer first to previous—experienced—Members of Parliament for Dunfermline, West and Dunfermline Burghs. My immediate predecessor was Mr. Dick Douglas. During his long career in the Labour and Co-operative Movement, he displayed—shall we say—an independence of mind. That career began when, as a young apprentice in the 1950s, he helped to lead a successful strike in the Clyde shipyards. It is a particular shame, therefore, that he decided to end his career by breaking away from the Labour and Co-operative Movement.

The vast majority of past and present Labour Members of Parliament for Fife have been and are an example of the best that the movement can offer. My special thanks must go to my hon. Friends the Members for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish). I pay tribute to the ceaseless work of members of the Labour party throughout Fife and especially in my own constituency. My respect and affection for the people of Dunfermline and West Fife grow with every passing day. Throughout the century, they have displayed an unswerving loyalty and commitment to the Labour movement.

I cannot end this part of my speech without paying tribute to an outstanding example of that loyalty and commitment, a former Member of Parliament, Mr. Adam Hunter, who, sadly, died last year. He worked as a miner for 40 years before becoming a Member of Parliament, and subsequently he served the constituency of Dunfermline Burghs for 15 years in a most selfless and conscientious way. He was totally without pomposity and everyone who knew him speaks of him with the highest regard. I can only strive to match a small part of his ability.

That brings me to my constituency. I said that Mr. Adam Hunter had been a miner in the area for 40 years, but the history of coal mining in my constituency goes back much further—more than 700 years, to 1291, when the monks of Dunfermline abbey first extracted coal from Pittencrieff glen. Throughout the constituency, villages developed amid coal mines—Oakley, Saline, Blairhall and High Valleyfield, to mention but a few. Yet now there is only one deep mine operating in the whole of Scotland, at the western edge of my constituency at Kincardine on its border with that of my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill).

My constituency's history is fascinating. This year, we are celebrating the 400th anniversary of Culross as a royal burgh. Next year we will mark the 900th anniversary of the death of Queen Margaret. I hope, too, that Dunfermline abbey will begin to be recognised as the Westminster abbey of Scotland. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

The communities of the constituency have a long history of work and welcome. They include communities from Townhill to Torryburn, from Charlestown to Crossford, from Cairneyhill to Carnock, from Halbeath to Limekilns and Newmills. The constituency's communities

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have a long defence tradition and we all owe a great deal to the people who live and work in Crombie, Pitreavie and Rosyth.

I am aware that this debate concerns the spring Adjournment. I should like to tell the House of all my concerns, but that would take days, rather than the few minutes left to me, so I have decided to use that time to raise just one issue—low pay.

George Bernard Shaw said, "Very few people can afford to be poor." I should like to think that that comment was history; it is not. The lowest-paid male manual workers earn less, relative to the average, than they did more than 100 years ago, in 1886. An unemployed married man with four children in Dunfermline was offered a job for 36 hours a week as a radio taxi controller for a wage of £54 a week. It would be comforting to think that that man was an exception; he was not. It would be comforting to think that low pay was confined to parts of Dunfermline; it is not. It would be comforting to think that it was confined to parts of Fife; it is not. There are 900,000 low-paid workers—one in three—in Scotland—and more than 10·4 million in the United Kingdom.

The Government have led the attack against Labour's call for a minimum wage of £3·40 an hour and the protection of wages councils. Will someone explain to me, and to the millions of low-paid workers, why the Government consider it immoral to pay a man or a woman £3·40 for an hour of work, yet moral to charge sick people—many of them on low pay and benefits—£3·75 for half a dozen pills on a prescription?

The Government have claimed that the introduction of a minimum wage would lead to unemployment. Given the extent of low pay, we should have full employment now. Instead, the latest statistics show an official figure of 2,695,300 unemployed, and the unofficial figure is much higher. Scotland is one of the parts of the country that have been hardest and longest hit by unemployment. Fife has the second highest unemployment rate in Scotland, with one in eight people out of work, and in parts of my constituency—central Dunfermline, for example—there is already an unemployment rate of 21·4 per cent.

The Government have said that they are keen on saving public expenditure. If that is the case, they should promote jobs with decent pay. If they did that, the people of Abbeyview in Dunfermline, 60 per cent. of whom depend on benefits, could instead earn a decent wage and contribute towards national insurance and tax. If the Government do not change their policy on poverty wages, that policy will add to the millions who already live on poverty pensions.

If the Government are keen to save on public expenditure, they should ditch the privatisation of the coal industry and the further attacks on local government and the health service. Privatisation will only add to unemployment, increase benefit demands and waste billions more of public money.

If the Government introduced a minimum wage, they could save public expenditure and increase income to the Exchequer. A minimum wage would bring in between £1·3 billion to £1·5 billion a year through tax and national insurance and fewer benefits. Minimum pay would also increase industrial efficiency and effectiveness. That is why 10 of our 12 European competitors have some form of minimum wage protection. The evidence that economic efficiency would be promoted by minimum pay has been provided by organisations such as the Contractors, Cleaning and Maintenance Association and the Electrical Contractors Association. I urge the Government to cease immediately any plans to abolish wages councils completely where the highest basic pay rate is a mere £3·08 an hour. Instead, the Government should assist employers to invest in equality and efficiency.

In conclusion, I want to quote Winston Churchill. He said that without the protection of minimum wages

"the good employer is undercut by the bad and the bad employer is undercut by the worst."

It is my hope and intention to work towards making that quote relevant only to the past—not to the present or the future.

5.11 pm

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): As is customary for those who have the honour of addressing the House for the first time, I wish to begin by referring to my constituency and to my predecessor. I am proud to represent Shoreham, which lies between the south downs and the sea in the county of West Sussex. We have a small port and an airport in Shoreham. In times gone by, we built wooden ships for the Royal Navy and for the merchant and fishing fleets. There was a time when Shoreham relied for its livelihood on shipbuilding contracts procured by its Members of Parliament. However, its Member of Parliament today has many tasks, but none is more important than to safeguard and promote the interests of local industry and commerce upon which the livelihoods of so many of my constituents depend.

Shoreham and Lancing are at the heart of the British simulator industry. Men and women of the most amazing technical skill and inventive genius build simulators to train the crews of aircraft and tanks. We also have a company that is equally extraordinary and at the leading edge of technology in the automotive engine industry. It designs engines for motor vehicles throughout the world. We also have a company that builds hi-tech operating tables and other extremely sophisticated equipment for the world's hospitals.

We have a famous public school at Lancing. At Findon we have a racing stables where Grand National winners have been trained. In the places that I have already mentioned and in Southwick, Sompting, Ferring, East Preston, and Rustington, there are pleasant residential areas to which people from all over the country come to spend their retirement years. Pensions are important for me. I have already joined the all-party pensions group and I have become a founder member of the group of 70 hon. Members who are pledged to fight for the Maxwell pensioners.

One of my predecessors as hon. Member for Shoreham was the father of the poet Shelley. However, my immediate predecessor was the right hon. Sir Richard Luce. He was a distinguished Member of this House for 21 years and he was well liked and respected by hon. Members on both sides of the House. He served his country well as a Foreign Office Minister and as Minister for the Arts. He is now vice-chancellor of Buckingham university and I am sure that the whole House will join me in wishing him every success in that new appointment.

On policy matters, I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on our policy towards Europe.

Britain should play a positive role in shaping the future of our continent. We should be good Europeans, but that does not mean simply saying yes to what the others want to do. I believe in co-operation, not federation.

The Government will also receive my support for returning the nationalised industries to the private sector. The private sector should do that which is best done in the private sector. I welcome the citizens charter because it is vital in any organisation, whether public or private, that the people who work in it know what is expected of them and that the people whom it serves know what they have a right to expect. In short, I believe that the citizens charter is the mission statement for the public service.

I would like to raise many issues in relation to the environment, but I shall refer to only one today. It is water. We all now know that water is a precious natural resource, and I would like to see the building regulations amended so that all new buildings are equipped with the means of collecting and storing rain water.

Many people in my constituency fought in the second world war, and many others lost their loved ones in that dreadful conflict. We must all be grateful that the cold war has ended, but we still live in a dangerous and unstable world. We must remember the lessons of the 1930s. Countries are attacked because they are too weak, not because they are too strong.

I had the honour to serve Her Majesty in The Life Guards. I regret the need to amalgamate some of our famous regiments, and I respectfully ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to reconsider the manning levels required for the Army. However, I welcome the Government's commitment to provide our soldiers, sailors and airmen with the very best equipment that modern technology can provide.

I also practised as a barrister for 14 years and I therefore have a particular interest in law and order. In 1987 I wrote a pamphlet urging the Government to ask Parliament to confer on the Court of Appeal the power to increase over-lenient sentences, and I was very pleased when that power was provided by the Criminal Justice Act 1988. As we have seen in recent cases, that does not always mean that a sentence will be increased, but it does mean that a higher court now has the opportunity to reconsider the matter.

I believe that automatic remission of sentences should be abolished, because it is a fraud on the public. If a judge sentences a man to six years imprisonment, our constituents have a right to expect him to be behind bars for six years. I know that judges take remission into account when fixing sentences, but sentences should mean what they say. If judges wish to pass shorter sentences, let them do so and let them see what the public think about it.

I am aware of the need to maintain discipline in prisons, but our constituents do not receive reductions in their income tax for good behaviour. Good behaviour is to be expected in this country, both inside and outside prison, and those who behave badly in prisons should have their sentences increased.

I am not against parole, as opposed to remission, and prisoners should be entitled to earn reduction of sentence. Many people are in prison today because the education system failed them, and more thought and more resources need to be devoted to remedial education in prison. Far too much of the time that prisoners spend in custody is completely and utterly wasted, and it needs to be put to better use.

Another matter relating to law and order is pornography. The law should be tightened up in relation to printed matter, films, television and the increasing use of the telephone system for pornographic purposes.

In Britain today, unemployment gives us all cause for concern. I will not say when the recession will end, because, as Groucho Marx once said, "It is dangerous to make predictions, especially about the future." However, I do know that the recession is temporary. Many people in our constituencies risk losing their homes because they cannot pay their mortgages. If they are on income support, they get their mortgage interest paid, but if they are on family credit, they do not. I have urged my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security to consider paying mortgage interest to people on family credit. That would be expensive, but when the taxpayer is helping a person to maintain and preserve a capital asset, I see no reason why the taxpayer should not get his money back when the recession ends and the property eventually is sold. For that purpose I suggest a legal charge upon the property.

The great majority of my constituents are Christian people. They believe that religious education in our schools should be predominantly of the Christian faith. They believe also, as I do, that everything that the Government do should be guided by Christian principles. Those principle are shared by the other great religions represented in our country today. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will never forget those principles, and I wish him every success in the years to come.

5.21 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen). I am sure that he will make an able representative of his constituency. He and I have in common an interest in law and order, although I suspect they are slightly different aspects. I hope that the House will forgive me if I do not follow the tradition to a great extent and get carried away with a eulogy, because I do not want any thunderbolts to come down from heaven and consume me in the next 10 minutes. As it happens, before the recess we should spend a little time discussing an aspect of law and order which I should like to think would be of interest to the hon. Member for Shoreham, but I am prepared for the possibility that it is not.

Two years ago, after a statement by the Home Secretary the day after four innocent people had their convictions quashed for the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings, the right hon. Gentleman set up a judicial inquiry under Judge Sir John May, a very distinguished judge, to consider not only those convictions but the seven other convictions that related to the Guildford and Woolwich case—those of Mrs. Maguire and her family, which have also been quashed. That inquiry seemed at the time to be urgent and there was an awful lot of curiosity about how it came to pass that those people were ever convicted of those offences. Two years and eight months have passed since that inquiry was set up, and it seems to have ground to a halt.

I cannot say that I am all that surprised. The history of judicial inquiries is not a happy one. Judicial inquiries into miscarriages of justice normally end by re-convicting those who have just had their convictions quashed. It became

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clear early on that Sir John May was not willing to be party to a whitewash and that he was conducting a rigorous inquiry. From that moment on, it also became clear that Sir John May would never be permitted to report. The years have ticked by and there is no sign of a report. I understand, although I have not spoken to him, that Sir John is considerably frustrated about the situation.

The reasons why I have never believed that he would be permitted to report are not all that difficult to work out. The Guildford case is distinguished from the other big celebrated miscarriages of justice in that all those concerned—it is possible to demonstrate it and I attempted to demonstrate it in my evidence to Sir John May's inquiry—must have known that they had got the wrong people. They chose not to face up to that for fear, perhaps, of the consequences for their own careers or for fear that the roof of the legal system might fall in. It is quite easy to demonstrate that. We have only to look at the cast of characters involved to see why there will be no report from Sir John May.

The judge was Lord Donaldson, now Master of the Rolls—the judge, I believe, in both the Guildford and Woolwich trial and the Maguire case that followed. The senior policemen involved—many police officers were involved—were Sir Peter Imbert, now the Metropolitan Commissioner, Commander Bill Hucklesby, who became very senior in the Metropolitan police before he retired, and Commander Jim Nevill, who was also extremely senior in the Metropolitan police. They helped to capture the IRA unit called the Balcombe street. There was a big siege at Balcombe street, which many people will recall —it lasted a week.

From that moment on, it must have been obvious—indeed, it was obvious—that those were people who carried out the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings. They were prepared to confess to it. They were able to describe it in enormous detail—such great detail that it was not possible to pretend that they had not been involved. The script had to be rewritten, and it was rewritten on a fairly spectacular scale. The problem was that the Balcombe street people insisted on owning up. When they came to trial, they all got up in court and said that as members of the Provisional IRA they would not normally recognise a British court, but on this occasion, since innocent people had been convicted for offences for which they were responsible, they proposed to plead not guilty to the enormous list of charges in front of them, and invite their barristers to participate in the proceedings only in so far as it would draw out the enormous amount of fraud and perjury that had been committed.

As a result of that dramatic new evidence, the Guildford and Woolwich defendants were entitled to a retrial. That posed a very serious problem for the authorities because there was a serious danger that the truth would emerge. Had they owned up at that stage, we could have said, "Oh well, it was a mistake," and perhaps it was up to that point, although I do not necessarily accept that either. But that is not what happened. A little-known 17th century procedure was revived whereby the Court of Appeal could sit also as the court of first instance, thereby knocking out the appeal to which those innocent people were entitled and the retrial to which they were entitled, at a single go in the absence of a jury.

That is an important point, because the Royal Commission on criminal justice is coming under a lot of pressure to blame it all on the juries. If it has succumbed to that pressure, it has been had. I will say only that. At every crucial stage in all such big cases steps have been taken to make sure that no jury is around. One cannot blame the jury. In this case, Lord Roskill, Lord Lawton, a former British Union of Fascists candidate for Hammersmith, and Mr. Justice Boreham presided. Even on the most generous interpretation, it is very hard to believe that they could not see what was going on and that the script was being rewritten from top to bottom.

Besides the distinguished people I have mentioned—Sir Peter Imbert, Commander Hucklesby, Commander Nevill, Lord Roskill, Lord Lawton, and Lord Donaldson —the Crown in all those cases was represented by the late Lord Havers, subsequently the Lord Chancellor. Now that we see the cast of characters involved it becomes clear, does it not, why we are never going to hear from Sir John May's inquiry? I have never believed that we would, and I now see reports saying that we are not going to. A decision has not yet been made, but it is about to be made. No doubt that will be when we are in recess. Perhaps it will take the form of a planted written answer to a tame member of the governing party.

I was invited, along with some other people, to submit evidence to Sir John May's inquiry. I did so and attempted to point out in words of one syllable where I thought that the responsibilities lay. I invited him to draw the appropriate conclusions.

When the royal commission was set up, after the release a year or two later of the Birmingham Six, to inquire into the criminal justice system in general, all those of us who had submitted evidence received a letter from the inquiry asking whether we would mind if our evidence was transferred to the royal commission—and no doubt subsumed into the enormous amount of evidence that it would receive. I wrote back and said no, I did not wish my evidence to be transferred. My evidence was specific to the Guildford and Woolwich inquiry. I wished it to go before Sir John May. I have heard nothing since that time. I knew from that moment on that the inquiry was doomed.

My purpose in raising this matter is to make only one point. When each of the great miscarriages of justice has occurred, the Home Secretary and occasionally the Attorney-General or someone else comes before the House and makes a statement. They say that everyone is upset about it, they hope that it will not happen again and they are determined to learn a few lessons from the case. I just hope that, if Sir John May's inquiry is to be abandoned —and it is—the Home Secretary will have the courage to come to the House and explain why it is to be abandoned. I hope that he will submit himself to questioning by the House and that we shall not one day find in *Hansard* some planted written answer telling us that it is all over.

5.30 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): First, may I welcome you to your post, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is good to have two Yorkshire folk in the Chair in this new Parliament. I

also congratulate the hon. Members who have made maiden speeches in today's debate. I can scarcely believe that five years ago I stood here in fear and trepidation doing much the same thing. It is clear from the quality of what we heard tonight that the new Members elected to Parliament in this latest election will grace our debates and will certainly be great ambassadors for the constituents whom they represent.

In my judgment, the House should not adjourn for the spring recess until it has considered and taken stock of the widespread opposition throughout North Yorkshire to the plans of the National Grid Company to construct a new overhead powerline from Teesside to Shipton in the Vale of York. It would go right through the Vale of York, running some 60 miles. The proposal is the subject of a public inquiry which began today in Northallerton. That inquiry is expected to last at least two months—a clear indication of both the serious nature of the proposal and the strength of opposition to it.

The proposed power line would pass through the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) and for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), who raised the issue in debate last April. My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) have also received many representations on the matter. All my hon. Friends whom I have mentioned wish to be associated with my remarks this evening.

It is the first time for almost a quarter of a century that a major extension to the national grid has been sought. The application arises out of the decision to construct a new gas-powered electricity generating station at the ICI complex at Wilton on Teesside. Neither I nor any of my hon. Friends have any objection to that splendid project in isolation, but we believe that there has been a clear failure of the planning procedures laid down in the Electricity Act 1989. It is a matter of great importance to the House that an amendment to those provisions be considered as a matter of urgency.

It has been well established that, when permission was granted for the Teesside project, no consideration was given to the potential consequences for the national grid. None of the local authorities—in my constituency, North Yorkshire county council and Hambleton district council—none of the parish councils or residents and landowners who would be affected by the consequent power line were consulted about the power project application. Yet residents and landowners are told that the new power line is essential to transmit the electricity generated by the Teesside plant into the national grid.

Without question, those affected by the proposed new power line should have been consulted before the power station was approved because the power line has clear environmental impact. That impact should have been a relevant consideration in granting the power station consent.

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): Does my hon. Friend agree that in any case the National Grid Company has yet to demonstrate that there is a compelling and clear need to construct the lines, which makes the environmental cost of their construction even harder for local residents to bear?

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend has anticipated the very point that I was coming to. It is indeed the view of North Yorkshire county council that the National Grid Company has not demonstrated the need for the proposed power line, and that existing transmission lines are adequate for the current level of electricity which it is obliged to transmit through North Yorkshire, including the power generated by the Teesside plant. However, there is a strongly held belief that further gas-fired generating stations are planned and that the proposed new power line is largely anticipatory of the likely requirements for transmission capacity in future.

The proposed power line should be a matter of grave concern to all right hon. and hon. Members for reasons that I shall explain in a moment. Privatisation of the electricity industry has brought many welcome benefits to both industry and domestic consumers and has introduced much-needed competition into power generation. The potential growth of cheaper and more cleanly generated capacity will bring environmental benefits in terms of reduced emissions. Those benefits are most welcome, but they should not be at the expense of the environmental impact of transmitting the new capacity through the national grid.

I make three points. First, this is the first major extension of the national grid for more than 20 years. What happens now will be a precedent for potential similar applications to extend the national grid in the years ahead. Secondly, as a result of the former point, the Electricity Act 1989 should be amended to require new generators, electricity boards and the National Grid Company to assess the implications for the national grid of any new power plants before permission is granted.

Thirdly, although in the past 20 years there have been many welcome advances in the technology of electricity generation—indeed, the Teesside project is one of the most advanced in Europe, if not the world—it appears that little if any advance in the technology of transmission has occurred in that time. We still have the same 150-ft-high pylons every 400 yd right across the country, of which there are already far too many in both my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague).

I am sure that many hon. Members often pass through North Yorkshire on holiday or en route to other destinations and will have observed the number of pylons there. They are a blot on the landscape. Their environmental impact is immense for the many people who live in their shadow. The National Grid Company claims that it can blend the pylons into the contours of the landscape. I fail to see how that can be achieved in the flat, open landscape of the Vale of York, especially at the southern end of the proposed line in my constituency.

I have never known such outrage, anger, resentment and despair as has been aroused by the proposed power line. The healthy increased majorities enjoyed by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks and myself, as well as the return of the Langbaurgh constituency into Conservative hands at the general election demonstrates that the proposal is not seen as a party issue. Nor is it seen as a quarrel with the Government. My constituents see it as an issue of moral justice. They will gain nothing from the proposal, but they will lose a great deal if the proposal goes ahead.

Would my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House convey those concerns to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, in his new post, with his new responsibility for energy? Many of my constituents

[Mr. Greenway]

now look to him to reject the National Grid Company's plans to review the provisions of the Electricity Act 1989, and to press the company to give the highest priority to the research and development of less environmentally damaging methods of electricity transmission.

Until then, the National Grid Company's obligations to link any new generating capacity into the national grid should be ended, unless it can be shown that there will not be the sort of environmental damage that is likely to result in north Yorkshire.

I can think of no more important matter affecting my constituents on which to make my first speech in this new Parliament. However, this is not a NIMBY issue. It is not a local protest but a matter of the gravest national concern. Unless the provisions of the Electricity Act 1989 are amended, the constituents of other right hon. and hon. Members will face the same sort of proposal very soon.

5.40 pm

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Thank you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I congratulate other new Members of Parliament who have gone through the nerve-racking process of making their maiden speeches and have acquitted themselves so well.

As a member, just, of the West Midlands police authority—a singularly ineffective body, for which I take no responsibility—I would like to use this opportunity to comment on the announcement by the Director of Public Prosecutions that there are to be no prosecutions as a result of the West Yorkshire police inquiry into the operation of the West Midlands serious crime squad.

Before I do so, I understand that it is traditional to pay tribute to one's predecessors and I do so willingly. I first became active in the Labour party just before Tom Litterick, the only former Labour Member for Selly Oak, was elected in 1974. Like my immediate predecessor, Tom Litterick was renowned for not always supporting the Government line. Unfortunately, I think that I am the first Member of Parliament for Selly Oak whose party is in opposition, and I shall not be faced with such difficult decisions.

Tom Litterick was one of the first to speak out in support of Mrs. Maguire and the other people whom we now know were the subject of miscarriages of justice. He did so at a time when that was very unpopular. I am proud of Tom Litterick's record for speaking out. I know that he would have been as concerned as I am about today's announcement.

Anthony Beaumont-Dark also had a reputation for being something of a rebel. Who am I to disagree with him about the poll tax? He has said that at times he was even paired with a Member from his own party. Hon. Members may be interested to hear that Mr. Beaumont-Dark recently confessed that there had been occasions when he was glad that he was not in the majority on a certain issue.

Anthony Beaumont-Dark had voted to restore capital punishment. During the election campaign, he told a public meeting how relieved he was that other hon. Members had not agreed with him and had voted consistently against bringing back the death penalty. In making that change of heart, I think that his mind was on the evidence of miscarriages of justice that has emerged in the past few years. The case of the Birmingham Six is especially relevant to the area that I represent. I am pleased that Mr. Beaumont-Dark has recognised that we should never restore capital punishment.

The West Yorkshire police inquiry was mostly concerned with events which have taken place more recently. However, I am worried that two officers involved in the interrogation of the Birmingham Six were still in the serious crime squad when it was disbanded in 1989.

Early cases, such as that of the Birmingham Six and of Keith Twitchell—who, after six months, is still awaiting the result of his petition to the Home Secretary—took place before the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. That Act, which was supposed to put right some of the previous problems with police operations, has been routinely ignored by the serious crime squad, who continued to behave arrogantly and ruthlessly. At least 20 cases have gone to court, and to the Court of Appeal, where there has been evidence—most noteworthy is the ESDA evidence—to show that confessions and forensic evidence have been fabricated.

The police have not dealt with the use of supergrasses in the way that one would expect, and plenty of the evidence in court has given us cause for concern. Today we have heard the outcome of the inquiry into those cases.

When the Police Complaints Authority summary was sent to the West Midlands police authority, it expressed concern about a report in 1985 by Commander Hay of the Metropolitan police, which made various recommendations. The most noteworthy recommendation was that officers should not spend more than two years, or a short time, in squads such as the serious crime squad. Those recommendations were completely ignored.

I have been trying to get to the bottom of the matter and to find out who saw the recommendations and why they were not acted upon. I have written to Geoffrey Dear, the chief constable at the time. He denies seeing the report, even though the Police Complaints Authority stated that several chief officers within the West Midlands police saw it. I then wrote to Les Sharpe, his deputy at the time, who is now chief constable in Strathclyde.

He could not help me, and it is still impossible to find out who saw the report, why it was not acted upon, why officers involved with the Birmingham Six case were still serving in the serious crime squad in 1989, and why so many of them had served for more than five years in the squad and had created a culture in the squad which has resulted in many people in the west midlands being deeply troubled by the operation of their police service.

We need to be concerned not merely about members of the serious crime squad but about the management structure of the West Midlands police and the way in which the culture of the serious crime squad was allowed to continue.

It is to be regretted that the inquiry has taken two years and nine months to come to its conclusions. Although the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department gave assurances last December to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) that there would be absolutely no cover-up in the investigation into the serious crime squad, the public in my constituency and in the west midlands, who want absolute confidence in their police force, will be deeply troubled by today's new announcement.

The chief superintendent in charge of the West Midlands police division that covers my constituency had direct line management for the serious crime squad. I am

concerned that the role of those police officers will not come to light and that we shall not find out who was responsible for the fabrications and the activities which have led to such public concern.

My constituents want a police force that they can trust and the House should not adjourn until the matter has been discussed adequately.

5.49 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I follow in the footsteps of the new hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Ms. Jones) and congratulate her on a fluent maiden speech, in which she expressed very positive views. I am sure that the House will hear from her on many future occasions. I was pleased that the hon. Lady conformed to tradition, at least at the beginning of her speech, by paying tribute to her predecessor, Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark. However, I was a little saddened that she did not continue with the tradition that the House has kept for some years, that a maiden speech should not cover matters that are controversial. However, the hon. Lady is of her own mind, and no doubt we shall hear a lot more from her in the future. I congratulate her and all the other hon. Members who have made maiden speeches today.

I am glad to have the chance to speak in this brief debate and raise an issue which affects my constituency. The subject was touched upon earlier in a powerful maiden speech from the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne). I relates to the decisions and funding requirements of regional and district health authorities as they affect two of the most vulnerable sectors of the community—the elderly and the mentally and physically handicapped. Such decisions are crucial to the provision of community and residential care for the mentally and physically handicapped.

In the previous Parliament, my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) served as Chairman of the Select Committee on Health. He said:

> "As a result of the policies of community care pursued by successive Governments, too many patients are being discharged too soon, for the wrong reasons, and without adequate support into communities which are unwilling, or unable to accept them."

I agree with that.

The announcement made on Thursday of last week by Crewe health authority that Cranage Hall hospital is to be closed in March 1995 falls into that category of closure, although the health authority added the rider that the decision will be subject to available resources being in place. Although some mentally and physically handicapped people belong in the community, when the necessary support structures are in place, individuals remain who, for whatever reason, require the security and stability of long-term hospitals—hospitals, which, in many cases, have been their homes for many years or decades. Those people cannot be expected to leave them without being caused considerable distress.

There are 255 residents in Cranage Hall hospital, and they are described by the health authority, with a glib attempt at semantic subversion, as "individuals with learning difficulties". Such a categorisation serves simply to distract attention from the real medical and social needs of many severely handicapped patients. In Cranage Hall hospital, there is a hard core of severely mentally and physically handicapped people. I have argued for the retention of a facility for them on that site since I was first elected to Parliament nine years ago.

I must put on record my appreciation of the efforts of Mr. Richard Jackson of RESCARE, who has done so much to represent the best interests of patients, and of Mr. Derek Stubbs, the present chairman of the Cranage Hall parents and residents welfare society, who has also played a key role. I have worked closely with those two groups to further their proposed alternative concept for the future of the site—a future which involves the creation of a village community, with full medical and social support for those patients who require an institutional or semi-institutional setting and who quite simply could not survive the harsh realities of life beyond its boundaries.

The regional and district health authorities, in their wisdom, have totally rejected a plan by the Bradford and Northern housing association, which is a non-profit-making body. It envisaged a brand-new facility on part of the Cranage Hall site, which would have been funded by the sale and development of the rest of the buildings and grounds. The plan provided hotel and leisure facilities, and housing of different categories for the local community. It was an imaginative plan that deserved consideration, but sadly it did not receive it. One had hoped that the plan would have had some appeal because it would have transferred the patients—and the costs of treating them—from the health service budget. They would have become tenants of the Bradford and Northern housing association.

The number of mentally ill and mentally handicapped people in our prisons, and sleeping rough on the streets, not just of our capital city but throughout our country, is a testament to the failure of the speed at which the policy of community care is being implemented. However, there have been successes in community care where committed and experienced staff have established close inter-agency links, and have been given adequate funding and resources. They have made a real go of things. I have visited such facilities and have been much impressed by what I have seen. None the less, the costs of running them are extremely high. Community care can only work if it is given adequate funding and has a high priority on the agenda of those authorities responsible for health, social and community services provision.

I must admit that I am appalled by the discourtesy of the chairman and chief executive of Crewe health authority in not informing me, as the local Member of Parliament, of the decision until after the public announcement of the closure had been made. It is not acceptable that hon. Members who have been actively involved in an issue of such importance which directly affects their constituency should be left to hear of such a decision through a telephone call from a local radio station which had already been given a full statement—albeit a statement which misled the media and the public about the practical effect of the proposals and the type of patients involved.

An added dimension to the decision to "fast-track" the closure of Cranage hall hospital is the problem of capital resources and how that will impact upon the care of the elderly who also live within the Crewe health authority. Three years ago, the health authority's elderly bed strategy went to consultation. It proposed that both Barony and Arclid hospitals would close in September 1993 and that new homes for elderly persons would be built, one of

[Mrs. Ann Winterton]

which would be located in Sandbach to cover my constituents' needs. The acute and rehabilitation service would be relocated at Leighton hospital in two or three brand-new wards. In the meantime, following on from the health service reforms, Leighton became the mid-Cheshire trust hospital and separate from the health authority.

The bid by Sainsbury's for the site at Barony hospital was accepted by the health authority; a contract was signed between the two parties, and an agreement was reached to clear the site in a set period, because the supermarket was to be built and opened by the end of 1993. It was intended and understood that health authority money would build new acute rehabilitation wards at Leighton hospital and that the trust would run them. The capital cost of the building would go via the region to the trust as an external financing limit allocation. The trust has a satisfactory capital plan—although it is not perfect—and it has much to renew in the way of equipment, some of which is many years old.

It is my understanding that the region is now saying that the district health authority cannot have the so-called Sainsbury's money, and that the trust must build the needed acute and rehabilitation beds at a cost of £2 million out of its present external financing limit. At the moment, the region is not committed to the building of those wards, but building must start in September of this year, for occupation in September of 1993. Therefore, contracts will have to be entered into without certainty [illegible]edge of where the huge capital sum is to come from.

The region cannot continue to step back from the problem. The real fear is that it is planning to rob Peter to pay Paul by using the proceeds of the sale of Barony hospital to Sainsburys to fast-track the closure of Cranage Hall hospital for the mentally handicapped. The Mid-Cheshire hospital trust at Leighton would be left in some financial uncertainty unless a clear commitment were given by the region now, as a matter of urgency, that the £2 million extra capital funding for the acute geriatric and rehabilitation beds will be forthcoming, as was previously understood to be the case by all the parties concerned.

I appreciate that I have dealt with detailed matters, but they are vital to my constituents. I call on the regional health authority and Crewe health authority to come clean with the people of my constituency, to tell them what the plans are and from where the money will come. Having done that, they should announce that the fast-track closure of Cranage Hall hospital will be put back by at least a decade, during which time other valid plans can be fully and properly researched.

6 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I wish at the outset, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to congratulate you on your appointment and to add my voice to those who have congratulated other maiden speakers. I particularly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Ms. Jones). Many, especially on these Benches, appreciated her comments.

Three new seats were won in Birmingham by Labour at the general election. We had spent the previous two years being told that they were barometer seats. We gathered that whichever party won Northfield, Selly Oak and Yardley would go on to form the Government. It seems that something went wrong with the barometer. I am convinced that in four or five years from now, we will be concerned not simply with so called barometer seats in Birmingham but with constituencies throughout the country, and that Labour will form the next Government.

Of course, one cannot be certain that there will not be any by-elections between now and then. I and my two colleagues from Birmingham—my hon. Friends the Members for Selly Oak and for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms. Morris)—have been allocated offices across the adjoining main road. We are worrying already about the problems that we might face as we cross the road together, perhaps coming to vote in a Division.

It is customary in a maiden speech to speak of one's predecessor. In Northfield, I succeed Roger King, who represented the constituency for nine years. He thrived on the reputation of being the motor industry Member. One of his claims to fame was to have won the first House of Commons versus House of Lords motor race. I think that if he wanted to be remembered for anything—he referred to the subject even in his own maiden speech—it was his campaign against the special car tax. No one could mistake the delight on his face when finally that tax was reduced by half in the last Budget. His only regret must have been that it was the party that he supported that introduced the special car tax in the first place in the 1970s. The recent reduction is welcomed by many of us on the Labour Benches. I add my congratulations to Roger King on his new appointment. He is not leaving the motor industry, for he has been appointed director of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

Northfield is synonymous with the motor industry. It lies to the south-west of Birmingham and contains the giant Longbridge car plant. Many of my constituents work there or in the associated component supply industry. The work force at Longbridge has contributed to the success of Rover in recent years, yet the car industry, like manufacturing as a whole, which is so vital to the Midlands, has been hit hard by the recession. Sales of new cars were down by 20 per cent. in the last year alone.

Those points are not simply of academic significance. Northfield's unemployment rate increased by 36 per cent. in the last year, but that bald figure hides a story of human misery and deprivation. The problems of poverty in Birmingham's inner city are reasonably well known. Though faltering and incomplete, some resources have been put into such areas and are beginning to tackle the problems of poverty in the inner cities. Far more invisible is the issue of outer ring poverty, in particular the poverty on our outer ring estates.

I might mention the estates at Bartley green, Weoley, Longbridge and Northfield itself. There are pockets of unemployment in those areas of between 70 and 80 per cent. They contain a high proportion of older people with a high dependency on benefits. There are also growing numbers of lone parents. In addition, startling poverty and deprivation results from the spiralling problem of debt which affects many of our constituents.

It is ironic to realise that a standard indicator of deprivation is lack of access to a motor car. A report by the director of public health in south Birmingham revealed that the area with the lowest access by families to a motor car was the ward of Longbridge. They make motor cars there, but they cannot afford to own them.

Where there is poverty, ill health soon follows. In south Birmingham, the area that I represent, along with my hon.

Friends who represent Selly Oak and Yardley, one clearly sees the problem of ill health. There is a high proportion of low-birthweight babies and stress-related illness is common, with people having a high dependence on tranquillisers.

If the Government are serious about tackling the problems of ill health in society, they must begin seriously to tackle the problems of poverty, bad housing and environmental deprivation. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms. Squire) that it also means tackling the scourge of poverty pay. Unless and until we tackle the problem of poverty in our outer ring estates, we shall have increasing problems with racism. We must reject any attempt to stir up resentment against people who live in the outer ring or inner ring. We shall not achieve anything until we address the problem of poverty in the outer ring and empower the people who live there to contribute to their own destinies.

An example in my constituency is the possible development of about 200 acres of land currently occupied by the psychiatric hospitals on what is called the Rubery and Hollymoor hospital site. It is due to be closed and redeveloped. That raises large issues about the kind of care in the community that will follow. If that land is redeveloped—it is being sold off by the regional health authority, to be developed, we understand, by a firm called Charters, which has had an involvement in Docklands—there must be choices about the type of development that will take place.

Will that development provide offices but few jobs for local people and will it provide housing that local people cannont afford? In other words, will commercial considerations be paramount, and will the local community merely be consulted and the real decisions be taken elsewhere? There is an alternative to that. Real jobs could be provided in that development, along with the necessary training. Housing could be provided in a way that is affordable for local people. It could also be constructed to protect the environment. In other words, the local community should be partners in the whole process and be given a say in the decision making.

As their representative in this place, I know which choice I shall make. It will be for the regional health authority and the developers to choose, but I shall be returning to the whole issue time and again, because the whole community deserves no less.

For the Government, there is the challenge of deciding whether they are prepared to face up to the problems of poverty and deprivation on our outer ring estates. Are they prepared to devote the necessary resources to improve housing conditions, protect the environment, provide adequate levels of benefit and abolish low pay?

Much has been said recently about citizens charters and the rights of citizenship. Those rights will mean little if they are not accompanied by the right to have decent living standards and to live in a pollution-free environment—in other words, to have a decent home. I, and my hon. Friends from Selly Oak and Yardley, will be bringing that issue before the House time and again because it greatly concerns the people we represent.

I am grateful to have had this opportunity to address the House.

6.9 pm

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): I am honoured to have been elected to represent the Vale of Glamorgan and should like to thank the 24,220 people who voted for me, particularly the 19 people who wavered most before putting a cross next to my name.

I am honoured because I follow in the footsteps of Sir Raymond Gower, one of the most distinguished Back Benchers. He acquired a reputation as the most prolific letter writer in the House. He also had a reputation for turning up on people's doorsteps at the most unexpected moment. It is said, no doubt anecdotally, that many of his constituents would hear a light tap on the door and would arrive at the door just in time to see him disappearing down the path. However, he was an assiduous Member of Parliament. He represented the Vale of Glamorgan—previously the old seat of Barry—for 38 years.

Sir Raymond's death in 1989 led to the famous by-election victory of my immediate predecessor, Mr. John P. Smith, who won by 6,000 votes. I pay tribute to John Smith for his extremely hard work as MP for the Vale of Glamorgan. He established himself as a popular Member of Parliament and very nearly pulled off the virtually impossible task of holding on to a seat won by Labour from the Conservatives in a by-election.

The Vale of Glamorgan is a beautiful constituency. If anyone is considering taking a holiday within the United Kingdom, I recommend it. It has about 20 miles of coastline and some attractive inlying areas, and so far, the countryside is relatively unspoiled. We have also benefited from the highest level of inward investment of any constituency in Wales, so there is much prosperity in the vale. One sad thing blights that picture: the breakdown of law and order, which has been widely experienced by my constituents.

My solicitor's office, which lies in the heart of Barry, was burgled five times in a few months, and I decided to conduct a survey on what was happening elsewhere in Holton road, which is the second largest shopping street in south Wales. The results of my survey made grim reading. One retail business has been burgled more than 200 times in two years. That reflects a national problem: last year, 5·3 million crimes were reported in Britain.

Before adjourning the House, we need to send strong messages to certain people. I welcome the announcement of a victims charter, but it does not go far enough. The main message that must go forth from this House is that we care far more about the interests of victims than those of villains. We need to send a message to the police, criminals, the motor industry, the courts, solicitors, victims and the public.

The message to the police should be that we support them in their tremendous endeavours to protect us. In return, we look for increased efficiency from them. We need to back up the police. If a police officer is assaulted in the course of his duty, we need to be able to rely on the courts to hand out tough penalties to his assailants. If a police officer or member of the armed forces is murdered in the course of his duty, the death penalty should be reintroduced. On the whole, the police force are marvellous but, as in any profession, there are a few rotten apples. Where those rotten apples cause miscarriages of justice through tampering with evidence, the courts should fall on them like a ton of bricks, and long prison sentences should be imposed.

[Mr. Walter Sweeney]

The main message for criminals must be that crime does not pay. Offenders who reoffend while on bail should know that they will be automatically remanded in custody and not given a chance to commit further offences. They should also know that, if they commit a string of offences and are eventually brought to justice, they cannot expect a string of concurrent sentences. The more offences they commit, the heavier should be the punishment. They should be made aware that, except in the most exceptional circumstances, they must pay full compensation to the victims of their crimes.

Our message to the courts should be that they should order full compensation, fines and prosecution costs. It is a disgrace that the Barry magistrates court does not normally award prosecution costs against defendants. When I put that to clerks of the court, I was advised that it was difficult to get blood out of a stone—most of the criminals are unemployed. If people are unable or unwilling to pay the orders made by the court, they should be set to work in a new scheme analogous to community service. They should be paid for that work but the money they earn should go first to the victims of their crime, secondly to the court in payment of their financial penalties, and thirdly to the prosecution in payment of costs.

The House should also send a message to solicitors, and I call on the Lord Chancellor to review the operation of the courts. I understand the Lord Chancellor's reasoning in trying to control the ever-burgeoning costs of legal aid by introducing standard fees for criminal legal aid work in the magistrates courts. I declare an interest, having practised for many years as a solicitor in courts. The Lord Chancellor has failed to take account of one of the main reasons why the cost of legal aid has gone up.

With the increased number of defendants appearing in court, there is far more waiting time, for which solicitors get paid at an uneconomic rate. They need to be able to charge for that waiting time if their bills are to reflect the amount of time devoted to the cases in question. Although I do not object to fixed fees for legal aid, the legal profession should, in return, have a reform of the courts' system. Such a reform should get rid of unnecessary adjournments, which are not the fault of solicitors acting for defendants, and reduce waiting time—for example, by introducing a staggered listing system similar to that which already exists in county courts.

The next message is to the motor industry. I want the House to legislate to make the installation of deadlocks on motor cars compulsory at the manufacturing stage. No new car should be sold in this country today unless it is fitted with a satisfactory lock. We have already legislated to make seat belts compulsory: why should not deadlocks also become compulsory? That would save an enormous amount of money in insurance claims, and young people driving high-powered cars would no longer be penalised because their cars were more likely to be stolen. It would be much cheaper to install those locks at the manufacturing stage than to add them later as accessories.

The most important message is to the victims of crimes. They should be allowed to use force to protect their personal property, provided they give full notice to the malefactors of the risks that they run by proceeding with their criminal actions. It is no good victims relying on the police. A report in the *Financial Times* today said that a police constable on the beat in London is likely to come within 100 yards of a burglary being carried out only every eight years. We cannot rely exclusively on the police, and must allow the victims to help themselves. I should also like victims to be invited to attend court so that they have the opportunity to make representations on compensation. Courts should make apologies to victims if full compensation is not granted, and explain why it has not been awarded.

The message from the House to the public should be that the House will not rest until the citizens of Barry and every other city, town and village are safe to go about their business in peace.

6.20 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I add my congratulations to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment.

In rising to make my maiden speech I confess to feeling "ever so 'umble". I am aware of the great traditions of this, the mother of Parliaments. I cannot deny the contribution made by the Chamber to the history of the British Isles. The irony is that I stood for election to the Westminster Parliament to secure my release from it, and the return of my nation to the full nation status that is richly and rightly deserved.

Mine is a particular privilege and honour as I represent the constituency of Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, where I was born and bred. I have the pleasure of representing my people, among them family, friends and innumerable acquaintances. Meirionnydd Nant Conwy is a geographically large constituency, although it is sparsely populated. My constituents have traditionally been staunchly independent—a tradition that, thankfully, persists.

In 1974, my predecessor, Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas, was elected to represent the constituency—one of the first real breakthroughs for Plaid Cymru. He held the seat with distinction until his decision last year to resign and make another career move. He was well known in the House as possessing a supreme intellect, and his contributions to debates are legendary. He also set the scene for a debate on the proper place for Wales in the European scenario. A committed European, he typically foresaw the proposed integration of the states of the European Community well before others. Many of his early speeches of 10 or 12 years ago still find favour today.

We in Wales, particularly Plaid Cymru, have always been comfortable with the concept of further integration, while preserving one's identity to the full. As well as being committed to Europe, my predecessor worked tirelessly on behalf of the people of Meirionnydd Nant Conwy and the people of Wales. He served on the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs and the Standing Committee that debated the Broadcasting Bill. He was a former president of Plaid Cymru and had a keen interest in regional and countryside policy, as well as cultural and educational policy. Last year he served on the Standing Committee on the Further and Higher Education Bill. He is a hard act to follow and I am mindful of the presssure.

I emanate from a professional stable once occupied by another Welsh wizard, Mr. David Lloyd George. I served my articles at the firm of Lloyd George and George, and

was articled to Lloyd George's nephew, Dr. William Lloyd George. My father knew Lloyd George—actually, he did not, but I thought that I would say so, anyway.

Welsh is the first language for the vast majority of Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, a constituency of breathtaking scenic beauty, and an amalgam of rural hill farms, slate mining towns and villages, coastal holiday resorts and traditional county councils. There is a saying in Welsh, "Tra Mor, Tra Meirion". For those who do not speak the language of heaven, I shall paraphrase the saying: Meirionnydd will last as long as the sea lasts. That is a romantic concept, but one which could soon be evidenced by local government reorganisation.

Meirionnydd Nant Conwy has everything that one could ask for, including gold mines. It could be argued that the monarchy might be in difficulty were it not for the reserves of high-quality gold in the hills of my constituency. I have to be careful not to romanticise overmuch—a temptation when one is describing something that one dearly loves. However, we do have problems—problems which may threaten the very existence of my constituency. They include high unemployment and chronic youth unemployment. There is a housing crisis of staggering proportions and crises in agriculture brought about largely by the Government's laissez-faire attitude to the common agricultural policy reform proposals. Such an approach appears typical when one considers the depth of Euro-cynicism among Government ranks.

Nothing that I have heard in the Chamber gives me comfort or reassurance that the serious problems are being effectively addressed—in fact, the contrary is true. Urgent initiatives must be taken if we are to combat the chronic youth unemployment. Is it not possible to re-evaluate the youth training schemes to make them more attractive to the young and to prospective employers? Would it not be possible to set a mandatory longer term for employment to qualify for the scheme?

We must try to regenerate the economy of Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, particularly as the Trawsfynydd power station is soon to be decommissioned. During a recent visit to the European Community headquarters in Brussels, I canvassed the possibility of funding for the future in the event of the station's closure, and was staggered that the subject had not previously been discussed.

We need inward investment, and to ensure that, we need a transport infrastructure that will attract jobs and job creators to Meirionnydd Nant Conwy. I referred to the crisis in housing. In the public sector, 1,100 people are on the local authority waiting lists. That figure is creeping upward daily. If there is to be a serious reorganisation of local government in Wales, it provides the opportunity to bring responsibility back to the local authorities, where it should be. The right-to-buy legislation had benefits for individuals, but wrought havoc on the public housing stock. The Government should be urged to fund Tai Cymru properly and so assist enthusiastic housing associations in their vital role. The problem is sufficiently acute to merit an attack on both fronts.

Planning legislation should be introduced in the private sector to minimise the detrimental socio-economic effect of second homes and the consequent harm to the constituency's intrinsic culture. It is well know that a small amendment to the Use Classes Order could readily address that problem. That would involve minimal legislation, but could have a major effect.

One family in five in my constituency depends either directly or indirectly on the agricultural industry. We must face the challenge posed by the CAP cuts head on, and we must cut the cloth to suit our needs. Only then can we be assured of a healthy and prosperous future for the constituency. It is no use sitting here and complaining: the answer is to take a full part in the European deliberations. The Secretary of State for Wales, as the Government Member responsible for agriculture in Wales, should have done so at an early date. I am hopeful that he will shoulder his responsibilities as he should and, even at the eleventh hour, take on the challenge for our communities.

On 11 May, the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) said that Plaid Cymru

"did incredibly well to win four seats in Wales",

although he confessed that he did not know what the message was. He also invited my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) to

"explain to the House where he thinks Wales is going."—[*Official Report*, 11 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 427.]

My hon. Friend is well able to answer any questions put to him, as he displayed in his masterly maiden speech, but I shall reply to the hon. Member for Christchurch.

Wales is on its way to self-government. The electorate of Wales will see Plaid Cymru as the only radical party in Welsh politics. They see Plaid Cymru as being in the main stream of European politics and they see in support for Plaid Cymru the way forward to solving its problems, some of which I have but briefly highlighted.

I pledge to work tirelessly and ceaselessly for the benefit of my constituents and the people of Wales. Thank you, Sir, for your indulgence.

6.28 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I rise with trepidation to make my maiden speech. Earlier today, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred to the making of a maiden speech as an occasion that no hon. Member would ever forget. I am sure that that is as true of me as of every hon. Member.

My trepidation has been increased by the series of eloquent speeches from other new Members, including the hon. Members for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne), for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Ms. Jones), for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) and for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) and my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen). I particularly enjoyed the speech by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne). I once visited Rochdale to watch a rugby league match, and I agree with the hon. Lady that it is a most interesting and agreeable place—and underrated—but I regret to tell her that on that occasion Rochdale Hornets lost by a wide margin.

I rise to make my maiden speech today to draw the attention of the House to a serious problem that has arisen in Hertsmere, but before doing that I should like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Cecil Parkinson, not just as a matter of custom but because everyone in Hertsmere would want me to. Besides occupying the highest offices of state, he was always held in the highest esteem and affection by his constituents, as a tireless servant of their interests. I know that he has many friends in this place and many others in the constituency.

Cecil Parkinson represented Hertsmere for more than 20 years. He first entered the House in a by-election in 1970, following the tragic death of Iain Macleod, then the

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Member for Enfield, West. One of the many pleasures of representing Hertsmere is that of meeting many people in Potters Bar and other parts of the constituency which used to be in Enfield, West who remember Iain Macleod to this day, who cherish his memory and who are proud of the influence that he exerted on the public life of this country. They are proud of his legacy and of the one-nation ideal which is still very much alive today. Their association with the late Iain Macleod is a matter of great pride to my constituents.

Besides Potters Bar, Hertsmere consists of a number of other communities in the southernmost parts of Hertfordshire, each fiercely independent and proud of its identity, but linked by a common thread of interest. Hertsmere has some of the loveliest countryside in close proximity to London. In the past week or so, we have heard many maiden speeches praising the beauties of the countryside of various constituencies, and I would add Hertsmere to that list—with the distinction that there can be few other places so close to London with such beautiful countryside. I know that both my predecessors were keen to preserve the quality of life in that countryside against the inevitable encroachment consequent on its proximity to London.

My constituents would also like me to mention the rail links between Hertsmere and London. It seems to be almost a convention that maiden speakers should complain about the state of the railway services to their constituencies, and we have heard a long list of such complaints—to which I should like to add a word of praise. Over the past 13 years, there have been great improvements in the rail services in my constituency, especially with the introduction of Thameslink, which has been supported by a considerable programme of investment in the railways. That in turn has greatly improved the rail services between my constituency and London.

Unfortunately, given the almost infinite capacity of British Rail to give with one hand and take away with the other, the improvement in daily services has been accompanied by a threat to Sunday services in the constituency, particularly to the communities of Radlett, Borehamwood and Elstree. In other parts of the constituency too, Sunday services leave something to be desired and my constituents want them improved.

My constituents are also interested in housing. A few moments ago, the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) mentioned complaints about housing. My constituents are pleased with the developments in housing in the past 13 years—especially the 3,600 of them who had the chance to purchase their own homes through the council house purchase-of-property scheme. Thousands of others became home owners over the same period.

In the current economic climate, my constituents greatly appreciate the suspension of stamp duty on house purchases which continues in effect until August—and they would be pleased if the scheme were extended.

One other matter gravely concerns a large number of my constituents. They all find it disagreeable, but for some of them it causes a great deal of hurt. I refer to a series of systematic attacks on the Jewish community in my constituency. In the past three months, Jewish people have been subjected to organised attacks on themselves, their religious institutions and their leaders.

In March, one of the synagogues in my constituency was visited twice by criminals, who attacked the premises and daubed them with slogans of the basest kind, thereby causing great pain to constituents who attended the synagogue. That was followed in April by two incidents when, at a different synagogue, congregants attending services were verbally harassed in an unpleasant way by people who were clearly acting in concert.

On top of all this, the private home of a rabbi was recently visited by people who one can only conclude were the same miscreants who had perpetrated the earlier offences. Once again, appallingly hurtful slogans were daubed, this time on the rabbi's private home; not only was his privacy invaded, but the entire Jewish community in the constituency were greatly affronted.

All right-thinking people in my constituency—my constituents are right-thinking people—are filled with the greatest disgust by these actions. Among the Jewish community, they re-awaken old fears and create potent new ones—and they cause the greatest possible hurt.

I raise this matter on the Adjournment because it is important, and I do so in the full knowledge that the Government have had an exemplary record of taking action against just this sort of activity. We know that the resources of the police have been greatly increased in the past few years, and legal machinery has been put in place to deal with such activities.

The Public Order Act 1986 created the new offence of incitement to racial hatred—a fact which I am sure is of considerable solace to my constituents at this time. They will be pleased to know that anyone engaging in this type of activity can now receive a sentence of two years' imprisonment. I hope that, when the courts deal with this sort of offence, they will take a robust view of sentencing and will sentence not only according to the immediate physical consequences of an act but according to the wider hurt and fear that it may create.

I urge the Government to take every opportunity, as I know they will, to stamp out this sort of activity. I am absolutely confident that it represents the antithesis of what the Government and the Prime Minister stand for and of the sort of society that he wants to create—indeed, this sort of activity should have no place in any decent society.

Although they can create a great deal of hurt, the people who perpetrate these crimes are probably very few in number. Nevertheless, my constituents are also concerned about the fact that, in recent times, extreme political parties have apparently enjoyed so much success in countries not far from our own. In those countries, sentiments espoused by political extremists in this country are expressed clandestinely, or even openly.

In the light of that, I urge the Government to continue to defend our constitution and our electoral system. I believe that that constitution and electoral system have served this country well, at times when other countries' constitutions and electoral systems have served them much less well. It would be a very sad day when the forces of extremism that we now see in other countries gained even a foothold in our own.

I have made my maiden speech with a great deal of pride. I am proud of being a Member of the House of Commons, and I am proud of its history; I am also proud

because I know that, in every party represented here, there is no place for the extremist activities that I have described. I hope that that will long continue, and that I never see the day when extremists occupy our Benches.

6.41 pm

Mr. Jamie Cann (Ipswich): I feel rather as I did when I first went to the dentist—full of trepidation, but knowing that at least it will all be over soon.

I have the honour to have been elected to represent Ipswich in the Labour interest, and in the interests of the people of that town. Before I go any further, I must mention my predecessor, Michael Irvine, who was an assiduous attender of the House and also a very pleasant man. He fought hard and defended the Government's position with courage, and I was therefore delighted to scrape home with a majority of 265.

Let me also mention Mr. Irvine's predecessor, who will still be well known to many hon. Members. Ken Weetch was the Labour Member from 1974 until 1987, and he is still very popular in both the constituency and the House.

Ipswich is just up the River Orwell from the port of Felixstowe, and was founded in the 5th century as an Anglo-Saxon village called Gyppeswic. It was burnt down four times by the Vikings, but we are still in favour of Europe—just. This year, its football team won the second division championship. It is now going into the premier league, and it is a matter of some sorrow to me that I shall not be able to watch the away matches because the rights have all been sold to BSkyB, or whatever it is called now. The team also won the 1978 FA cup against Arsenal, I am pleased to say. At that time, everyone in the town was incensed by the football commentators' description of Ipswich as a "sleepy little market town". We are not that; we are an industrial-relations town at root.

Ipswich still has many manufacturing industries, producing grass-cutting machinery, compressors, car components, lift motors, valves, pipes, castings and so forth. It has, however, broadened its range, and is now a large commercial centre specialising particularly in insurance firms. It is also the fifth largest container port in Britain. We in Ipswich have many facilities, and we live in a beautiful area in which we take a great deal of civic pride. We consider ourselves the regional capital of East Anglia; colleagues in Cambridge and Norwich dispute that, but of course they are wrong.

We have our problems, of course, but I wish to mention only one of them today. A large concern in the constituency, Ransome and Rapier, recently went bust; not only did it go bust, but, unfortunately, it went bust a few months after it had been bought by Robert Maxwell, and its pension fund is one of those that have been looted by him. The House will not be surprised to learn that I am one of the hundred or so Members of Parliament who are trying, on an all-party basis, to get something done about that. It is all very well for us to adjourn for our holidays next week, but some of my constituents do not know whether they will receive their pension cheques at the end of the month. Already a pension fund has closed down, affecting some people in Suffolk.

I believe—along with all the other members of the action group—that it is right, proper and desirable for the President of the Board of Trade to make a statement. We should like that statement to say that the Government undertake to drip-feed and underwrite any pension funds that may be in danger of closing absolutely, so that they may be kept going until investigations have apportioned blame. In particular, we should like the right hon. Gentleman to assure us that he intends to help to force the banks to release the £217 milion of pension fund money that they are holding. It is not their money; it was lodged with them as security, but it belongs to the pension fund, and we should like the Government to help us to get it back. We also believe that the right hon. Gentleman should take on board the 30 suggestions made by the Select Committee on Social Services, so that we can ensure that such a thing never happens again.

That is the only problem affecting Ipswich to which I shall refer today, because it is the most urgent. Ipswich has other problems, however, and I promise that on future occasions I shall bring them to the notice of the House.

6.46 pm

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): I have been privileged to sit here this afternoon and hear the many contributions made by other hon. Members, particularly the maiden speeches. However, the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) made me feel even more daunted by the challenge.

In making my maiden speech, I find little difficulty in following one convention—that of referring kindly to the previous Member of Parliament for my constituency. Mr. Ian Grist is an old-fashioned gentleman of courage and integrity, and I have met no hon. Member on either side of the House who thought ill of him. He was very well regarded by his fellow Welsh Tory Members, who showed particular and unusual loyalty to him when he was sacked last year as a junior Welsh Office Minister.

It was said at the time that Ian Grist paid the price for backing the wrong horse in the Tory leadership election. I hope that it will now be of some comfort to him to learn that his friend and colleague, the hon. Member for the neighbouring constituency of Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), has succeeded him in his former post. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate my fellow Cardiff Member on his promotion: I am sure that, like Mr. Grist before him, he will seek consultation and consensus before controversy and conflict. One result of the general election for which we can thank my hon. Friend the new Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) is the reversal of a "Major" change in the Welsh Office: again, there are three Heseltinians working in harness there.

Reading the maiden speech that Mr. Grist made 18 years ago, I was struck by his reference to the changing structure of employment in the constituency. He noticed the decline in traditional industries that was taking place then, and the fact that the service sector was becoming dangerously dominant. Over the past two decades, little has changed in that regard. If anything, the trend has accelerated: with the notable exception of Panasonic and Allied Steel and Wire, it is the service industries that now dominate Cardiff to an excessive degree.

The service sector provides over 80,000 jobs in a city that has a population of less than one third of a million, and during the past decade there has been a further 9 per cent. reduction in the activity of productive industries. Jobs in metal goods and vehicles have declined over that period from 10,000 to 8,500. Other manufacturing has seen a decline in employment from 8,500 to 7,000. The figures confirm a long-term loss of Cardiff's productive

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sector and the manual employment that it provided, and it is no longer an industrial city. Indeed, Bournemouth manufactures more than Cardiff. The Government generally and the Welsh Office especially must help local authorities and industry to redress the employment imbalance.

This month's employment statistics show that, in Cardiff, Central, 4,765 people are officially registered as unemployed. It is the second highest level of unemployment in Wales—higher than the levels of unemployment in the valley constituencies. That is the unemployment that is to be found in the centre of the Principality's capital.

The constituency contains pockets of dangerously high levels of male unemployment. It is 27 per cent. in the Adamstown ward and 20 per cent. in Cathays and Plasnewydd. These inner-city wards need work desperately. In some parts of the city, as many as one in every two young men are out of work. The stresses and strains that this places on our society can be seen, perhaps, in Coventry and Los Angeles. They were evidenced in Ely, another Cardiff ward, last year.

My research has shown that, before Mr. Grist, the Member who represented my constituency was my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). My hon. Friend won the seat in 1966 and held it for the next eight years. When he made his maiden speech as the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central, he referred to the building of the Severn bridge, and that presents an opportunity that I can hardly resist. During his eight years as the Member for my constituency the toll on the bridge decreased from half a crown to 12p in 1974, which was a 41 per cent. decrease in real terms.

The toll increased to £1 during the 18 years of Mr. Grist's representation of the constituency. In real terms, that was perhaps a modest increase of 35 per cent., about 2 per cent. per annum above the rate of inflation. I have represented the constituency for only one month, and the toll has already increased by 40 per cent. for cars—the charge is now £2·80—and 180 per cent. for light vans, for which the charge is now £5·60. In only a month, the tolls have increased by much greater amounts than the sum total of previous increases over the previous 26 years.

It is worth comparing the figures with the tolls that are levied on the Dartford bridge, which are currently 80p each way for cars and light commercial vehicles. It is a valid comparison, as the Dartford bridge, which was opened in October, was built to relieve bottlenecks between Essex and Kent. Could the difference in treatment relate to the number of Conservative-held constituencies in Essex and Kent, bearing in mind that there are only two Conservative-represented constituencies in Gwent and Glamorgan?

If, as we are told, high tolls are needed to finance the second crossing of the Severn, why are there no tolls on the new M40, which was built at considerable cost to relieve the M1 and the M6? Over the next few years, it is estimated that £1 billion will be collected on the Severn bridge, and much of that money would have been spent in south Wales. As we have no overall tolling policy in the United Kingdom, unlike some other countries, we have what amounts to a selective tax on the economic region of south Wales.

Two hundred years ago, small farmers and traders in west Wales became so enraged at the unfair tolls exacted on the goods they took to market that they burned down the toll gates, but I am not advocating burning down the Severn bridge. The farmers disguised themselves as women, and the uprising became known as the Rebecca riots. My wife has an ancestor who, as a Rebecca rioter, was deported to Australia. Press reports suggest that business men and women who are running small businesses in Avon and Gwent will demonstrate on the Severn bridge during the bank holiday, thus producing even more traffic chaos than normal.

I ask the Government seriously to reconsider the tolls and to note the protest. The tolls are unjust and have caused otherwise law-abiding citizens to consider taking action that even threatens to drive the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) into the arms of the daughters of Rebecca. I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman for Wales, to use all his influence to change the unjust tolls.

6.57 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): First, Madam Deputy Speaker, I congratualte you on your appointment. As you know, I have long been one of the your greatest admirers in the House. I look forward to a long and happy relationship with you. It is one that has started most auspiciously this evening.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Owen Jones) on his maiden speech. He made it with wit and with a succinctness that I shall try to follow. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott), the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, wishes to respond to the debate at about 7 o'clock, which gives me only two minutes. I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central that it takes some courage to refer to early cross-dressing in Wales in a maiden speech. I look forward to hearing more of his speeches.

There is a lesson for all newly elected Members, and it was the first lesson that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) taught me. I think that it is a lesson that he teaches everyone. It is important to know that, if we are to take advantage of this place, we must be present. Being here is the important thing. There have been two wonderful examples today of the advantage of being here. The first example was provided by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover, who took advantage of the opportunity that our proceedings offered to have a debate on a matter of principle. That was followed by a somewhat controversial vote, but it was an interesting manoeuvre.

We then heard my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin). He provided an object lesson for all newly elected Members and experienced Members. He demonstrated how useful this place can be for an assiduous Member who wants to pursue the cause of justice, as my hon. Friend has done so well and so often.

In the short time that is available to me, I suggest that the House should debate the disposal of county hall before we move off for the spring adjournment. I should explain for new Members who do not know London that county hall is the wonderful building almost opposite the House that used to be the headquarters of the Greater London council. It is a grade 2 listed building. It was paid for by London ratepayers, and it was there to be the home of

Londonwide local government. Had my party won the election, it would have been restored to that position. It would have been the home of the new greater London authority. Unfortunately, an ungrateful electorate did not give the Labour party the majority that it merited, which means that we shall not have to return to this issue on a later date.

The House should surely have some time to consider the various options that are now being proposed for county hall. The GLC was abolished in 1986, as an act of political spite by the Government. It was inspired and initiated by that vicious old loony who is now on her way to the other place. That viciousness was subsequently compounded by a decision not to allow county hall to be used for public purposes.

It was suggested that it should be used for offices for Members of Parliament, and that would have been welcomed on both sides of the House. There was also a proposal that it should be used by a Government Department, and we would have been prepared to accept that if we could not have it for a new Greater London authority. If officials of the Department of the Environment are to move, perhaps they should move into county hall rather than being moved down river to Canary Wharf to save Olympia and York.

Currently, there are two proposals for county hall—one from the London School of Economics and the other from a Japanese hotel organisation called the Shirayama group, which is a privately owned company with a staff of seven and a turnover last year of only £10 million. The LSE has put forward a more than adequate proposal for the use of county hall, so it is absurd that a proposal from a fly-by-night cowboy concern should be looked on with apparent favour by the Government, and certainly with favour by the London residuary body.

It is scandalous that an international academic institution such as the LSE should be bounced in favour of a cowboy Japanese hotel group. If county hall were to be turned into a luxury hotel and luxury flats, patronised by Japanese tourists, it would be an obscene and absurd use of that wonderful building. I hope that, when the Government consider the proposals from those two very different organisations, they will favour a British educational institution over a Japanese hotel group.

7.1 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): I congratulate you on your appointment, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Broadcasting Select Committee's loss is the Chair's gain. I am sure that you will enjoy your position; we shall certainly enjoy your presence in the Chair.

It has fallen to me to respond to a large number of Adjournment debates over the past five years, and I must confess that there have been occasions on which my attention has wandered while I have sat through three hours of speeches. However, I appear to have done the job so well that I am asked back time and again.

My attention has wandered much less today than in the past, because of the interesting maiden speeches that we have heard. It always sounds patronising to say that maiden speeches are outstanding, but I truly thought that they were today. Most of us tend to put more sweat into a maiden speech than into subsequent speeches, so perhaps the amount of work put into their preparation is reflected in their quality. The quality was certainly high today. Although, there were 10 maiden speeches, and it would take me more than the 10 minutes available to respond to them all properly—but I shall try.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Miss Lynne) spoke with great fluency about the discriminisation experienced by people with disabilities. I am sure that she will want to speak about that on future occasions and that the House will want to hear her.

I am sure that the House will understand when I say that the two maiden speeches that gave me the most pleasure were by Members for west midlands constituencies. We did our bit in the west midlands, with seven net gains for the Labour party. That will increase the west midlands regional group—already a splendid group—by 25 per cent. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Ms. Jones) made a highly knowledgeable and serious speech about the west midlands serious crime squad—one that certainly demands a response from the Minister when he replies to the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) produced the most startling statistic—that the lowest access to car usage by families in any south Birmingham ward is in the Longbridge ward. It is a statistic that in future I shall quote as though it were my own.

It is appropriate also to refer to a speech that was not a maiden, but which in many ways related to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak. I refer, of course, to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin). I do not need to patronise him, but I thought that it was a masterly speech, given his tremendous record on exposing miscarriages of justice. The Government should understand the sense of outrage that people feel about those who have received sentences—which in the past undoubtedly would have been capital sentences—and who are now known to have been innocent. My hon. Friend controls his outrage in a most remarkable way. His comments certainly need a response from the Minister.

Other hon. Members also made their maiden speeches on law and order, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South said, they were of a slightly different flavour from his. The hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) spoke about law and order, and we do not like to disagree with comments made so early in someone's parliamentary career. However, he also said something with which I strongly agree, and that was about the plight of the Maxwell pensioners. That issue was also raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann), who also made a splendid maiden speech. Again, the Government must respond to those speeches. I am sure that many other hon. Members would also have raised that matter had they had the opportunity to do so.

I was impressed by the phrases used in the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms. Squire). I liked the phrase she used about parts of her constituency, where "work and welcome" are characteristics. Again, that is a phrase that I shall use as though it were mine. The substance of my hon. Friend's speech was about the low-paid, a subject to which I hope she will return again and again. Labour Members make no apologies for the campaign we fought during the general election on the basis of a strong belief in a national basic minimum wage.

The hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) was most generous in his remarks about his

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predecessor, my friend John Smith, who was a splendid Member for Parliament for that constituency. The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) spoke with pride about the area that he represents, and he too paid tribute to his predecessor. The hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) spoke fluently and without notes in his maiden speech. He showed quite remarkable confidence.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Owen Jones) made an extremely witty speech. It is difficult to jest in this place, but he managed to do so while also making serious points. I hope that he does not incite his constituents to riot. He certainly made a powerful case about toll charges on the Severn bridge.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich raised another issue about which I want to speak before my coat is pulled; I am rapidly running out of time. As my hon. Friend said, due to the operation of the free market, his constituents, like those of other hon. Members, will have less and less choice in the amount of sport that they can see on television. I raise that matter in what is perhaps a populist manner, but it is extremely serious and important. The new Leader of the House is the fourth in five years, and one of his key responsibilities will be as a member of the Broadcasting Select Committee—where I hope to join him.

That was one of the few achievements of the last Parliament and one of the few about which I feel pleased. Most of the others I opposed. However, we massively extended our democratic system by allowing television pictures from this House to reach millions of our constituents. That has been an unqualified success. I hope that the televising of Parliament will be extended and developed. I hope, too, that there will be television coverage of more Select Committees and Standing Committees and that there will be more regional coverage by the regional television companies. In addition, I hope that more educational use will be made of the signal from this Chamber.

The Leader of the House must, however, have a few words with some of his right hon. Friends. There is not the slightest point in transmitting spectacularly good pictures of what goes on in this Chamber, or anywhere else, if there is no national system of broadcasting. I used sport as a very important example. We were unable to watch World Cup cricket and we will be unable to see many Football League matches, because the so-called market forces have ensured that a small company with a lot of money behind it has denied most of my constituents, who do not have satellite dishes, the right to watch all these events.

If that is an extension of freedom of choice, it is a new definition. It is not even, in any sensible way, the operation of market forces. If market forces had operated in relation to satellite broadcasting, the companies involved would have gone bankrupt a long time ago, but, they were bailed out by other related companies with plenty of money to spare.

Having referred to the sports side of the question, I return to the television coverage of the proceedings of this House. It is not just that national television is being threatened as a result of the loss of the coverage of sporting events that previously all people could watch. There are now serious threats to the news and current affairs coverage that is provided by our national television networks. Tremendous damage was done to the system by the Broadcasting Act 1990. Now we hear that programmes such as "World in Action" are likely to lose their prime time slots. "This Week" and other current affairs programmes are also threatened. We hear that some companies think that programmes such as "News at Ten" are taking up prime time slots and that "News at Ten" should be changed to "News at 3 am" so that a game show can be transmitted at 10 pm.

The effectiveness of the way in which politics and current affairs are covered in this country, including the way in which the signal from this House is used by the broadcasters, depends upon serious programmes being transmitted at times when viewers are able to watch them. The BBC and ITV national networks must be defended and sustained. No good will be done by unedited transmission of the proceedings in this House to a few people with satellite dishes. People are informed about national issues by news and current affairs bulletins that are made available to everybody and transmitted at a time when they are up and awake and able to take advantage of them.

I do not believe that I am putting in too grandiose a way when I say that, if anybody says anything about the coverage of the general election campaign, they will have to acknowledge, in fairness, that, if the people of this country had had to rely on newspapers alone for their information, any remote notion that the election was fought on a level playing field would have been ludicrous. The only conceivable argument that it was or began to be a level playing field would be that there was national broadcasting on radio and television that followed the guidelines laid down by the House.

If, during the next five years, the national broadcasting system is undermined—we see it already in sport and we may see it in current affairs—and it becomes more like the newspapers, with dozens of editions available but no content of substance and no requirement that there should be fairness and impartiality, the next election will be fought on a grotesquely unfair basis, because people will not be provided with proper, balanced information about news and current affairs.

The responsibility of the Leader of the House to this House is different from that of any Member of the Cabinet. He will be judged not by the extent to which he is a hatchet man for the Government but by the extent to which he sees that he has a responsibility to the whole of the House, which includes ensuring that the affairs of this House are properly transmitted by television signals and other means to the public at large, upon which they can make a balanced judgment on how we go about our affairs and debate the great issues of the day. It is his duty and responsibility to do that in as non-partisan a way as he can. If he does that, he will certainly have our support.

7.15 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I hope that the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) will forgive me if, during the short time available to me, I do not refer to all the points that he has made. The spirit in which I shall approach my duties as Leader of the House was fairly

well set out in the speech that I made at the conclusion of the debate last week on the Gracious Speech, which I hope did not qualify me for his terminology as a hatchet man.

I do not suggest that I used to have fantasies about being Leader of the House, but I have always had a hankering to be in the position, at the end of this particular debate, of being able to look the House in the eye and say to all those Members who had made speeches that they had been so persuasive that I had decided that we should not have the recess. However, I have decided that discretion is the better part of valour.

Therefore, on this slightly strange occasion, when the Leader of the House is supposed to be one of the world's most formidable polymaths, capable of replying to all the points that have been made in profusion during the debate, I shall do what is expected of me. If I am unable to communicate as much information as the House would like to hear, I have to admit that I have learnt a great deal, including the names of an almost infinite number of towns and villages. At one point I thought that I was going to learn from my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) the name of every squirrel in Brampton wood.

Let me attempt to comment, in the time available to me, on some of the speeches, including a formidable number of very good maiden speeches. The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) paid what we all regarded as a pleasing tribute to her predecessor, Sir Cyril Smith, who was certainly one of the characters of the House in the time that I have been here. She showed that she will be a worthy successor because of the vigour with which she spoke about community care. That did her great credit. I hope that she will understand that, were I making a longer and different speech, I should wish to comment on the way in which the Government's plans for improving the delivery of community care are moving forward at this very moment, in the way she knows. However, she was right to place great emphasis on the importance of the subject.

We also heard a pleasing maiden speech from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms. Squire), who is not currently in her place. [HON. MEMBERS: "She is."] I apologise unreservedly.

Mr. Tony Banks: The right hon. Gentleman cannot afford the eye test.

Mr. Newton: I can now assure the hon. Gentleman that he will get left off the end of this speech.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West brilliantly described her predecessor, Dick Douglas, as a man of independence of mind, a description with which all of us would agree, and went on to make a plea on behalf of Dunfermline abbey as the Westminster abbey north of the border. That drew a surprising degree of assent—given that there must be a number of other competitors—from some of her Scottish colleagues on the Opposition Benches.

The hon. Lady spoke more controversially, although not unacceptably so, about the problems of low pay. On that front, I would merely observe that only two Community member states—France and Spain—have a statutory minimum wage of the kind that she appears to advocate. France is experiencing record levels of unemployment and Spain has the highest unemployment of any country in the Community, so those two countries are not an especially good advertisement for what the hon. Lady proposes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) spoke of his predecessor, Sir Richard Luce—a man held in high regard by all of us—and then went through a formidable list of demands which, to my great pleasure, appeared to bear a considerable resemblance to the Conservative party manifesto, thus presenting me with a rather less difficult task than some Opposition Members did. My hon. Friend spoke persuasively, and his was an impressive maiden speech.

I think that I am right this time: the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) is not in her place. [HON. MEMBERS: "She is."] In that case, she has moved. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, will probably agree that it is useful if hon. Members sit in the same place most of the time because we then have some chance of knowing whether they are here. At any rate, I am glad to remedy that error, too, and say how pleased all of us on the Conservative Benches were with the hon. Lady's comments not only about her Labour predecessor, Tom Litterick, but about her immediate predecessor, Anthony Beaumont-Dark, whom we remember even better and with a good deal of affection and respect.

The hon. Lady commented mainly on the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions in respect of the investigations of the West Midlands serious crime squad. She will probably understand—as her hon. Friends certainly will—that the only comment that it is proper for me to make is that the decision whether to prosecute is entirely for the DPP. It was a fluent and impressive maiden speech, none the less.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) recognised not only his own interest in the motor industry but the formidable interest of his predecessor, Roger King, both in the motor industry in general and in the sport of motor racing in particular. Reference was made to Roger King's victory over the House of Lords—which the absent hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) would no doubt regard, approvingly, as some kind of symbol—in a rally some time ago.

The hon. Gentleman's speech will have struck a chord with many of his Scottish colleagues. He referred not only to the problems of inner cities, which we all seek to address, but to a problem that is more familiar to Scotland—the outer-ring estates around cities—and drew a parallel with Birmingham. The Government are well aware of the sort of problems of which the hon. Gentleman spoke, although we might not all agree on what is the right solution. I shall certainly ensure that the hon. Gentleman's interesting remarks are drawn to my right hon. Friend's attention.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) spoke in a way that will have impressed hon. Members on both sides of the House about his immediate and short-lived predecessor, who won the seat in the by-election. My hon. Friend properly paid tribute to John Smith, who, as he said, nearly pulled off the very difficult task of retaining the seat at the general election. Conservative Members are pleased that my hon. Friend managed to pull it off himself, and I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will look closely at his remarks about crime in the area.

I have some difficulty in competing with the remarks of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr.

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Llwyd), the name of whose constituency I have some difficulty in pronouncing. He clearly shares with us a high regard for his predecessor, Dafydd Elis Thomas. We were sad to see Dr. Thomas go, but it is clear from the hon. Gentleman's remarks that he will be a worthy successor in speaking for the Welsh interest in the House. In view of his reference to Welsh as the first language of his constituency, I hope that he was pleased to see that a Welsh language Bill was included in the Queen's Speech.

As the hon. Member for The Wrekin said, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) spoke with tremendous fluency and without notes, and in a way that will have commanded support across the party divide about the disgraceful attacks on synagogues in his area. He will have drawn the support of us all for his remarks on that, and I assure him that the Government and all my right hon. and hon. Friends will be concerned to do anything that they can to help him and the police and other authorities in his constituency to try to stamp out that entirely unacceptable behaviour.

I fear that I must apologise to those who spoke in the debate who did not make maiden speeches, as I may not be able to comment on what they said in the two minutes left to me. Instead I come to the last two maiden speeches. The hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Owen Jones) paid tribute to a long-standing friend of mine, Ian Grist, with whom I used to be in the Conservative party organisation years ago, and made some remarks while I was briefly out of the Chamber which I had recorded for me. The hon. Gentleman apparently referred to the burning of toll gates in Wales during the 18th century and appears to have referred to—although I hope not made—a threat of similar demonstrations in the vicinity on a bank holiday in the near future.

Lastly, I come to my nearest neighbour in my Essex constituency of Braintree, the new hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann). I much appreciated his remarks about his predecessor, Michael Irvine, who brought a number of Maxwell pensioners to see me when I was Secretary of State for Social Security. I know Ipswich rather well. I was a boy in Harwich, and I used to watch Ipswich play football in the days when there was still something called third division south and nobody had heard of Ipswich. One thing that he and I have in common, across the political divide, is our great pleasure at the success of his town in football over the past few years.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising on Friday 22nd May, do adjourn until Tuesday 2nd June.

Orders of the Day

Non-Domestic Rating Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

7.27 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill will reduce the non-domestic rates for businesses in England and Wales facing the largest increases in their rates following the 1990 non-domestic revaluation. It honours the pledge given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget speech on 10 March. The Budget proposals in question were well received by the Opposition. I hope that the Bill, too, will be welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The 1990 reforms have brought substantial benefits to many businesses. Those that have reached their full new rate bills are already benefiting from the limitation of any increase to the rate of inflation. About half of all properties in England and Wales would have experienced rate rises of only 4·1 per cent. this year, anyway—before the Bill was introduced.

For a number of businesses, however, the 1990 reforms would have meant much larger increases this year. That is primarily due to the effects of the large shift in rateable values resulting from the revaluation. For many businesses, particularly shops and offices in the south-east, values have not caught up with the changes in rental values during the boom years of the 1980s.

Many hon. Members will agree that we could not go on using valuations based on the market as it was in 1973. Adjustment was bound to be painful, which is why we are phasing in the changes gradually.

Under the transitional arrangements already in operation, no bill was to rise by more than 20 per cent. a year in real terms. For smaller businesses—those with a new rateable value of £15,000 in London or £10,000 elsewhere—the limit was 15 per cent. For properties with living accommodation attached, we reduced the limit to 10 per cent. from 1 April 1991, on top of the £140 reduction in personal community charge on the domestic element.

I know that the recession has created difficulties for many businesses and some of those that would have faced the largest increases this year have been particularly hard hit in the recession. The Government have therefore decided that their costs this year should not be worsened by any real increases in the business rates.

We propose a one-year freeze to provide a breathing space. We estimate that almost a quarter of a million shops and offices, many in the south of England, will benefit from reductions worth more than £160 million from this measure alone. Manufacturing industry in the north will also benefit. More than 80,000 properties in the industrial sector in the country will receive reductions totalling £25 million. A further 160,000 business premises will gain relief worth £110 million, bringing the total cost of the measure to more than £300 million this year and £200 million next year.

The gains for individual businesses could be substantial. A small business property outside London with a new rateable value just below the £10,000 threshold

could save around £1,000 over the next two years in the amount that it has to pay. A property in London with a new rateable value just below the £15,000 threshold could save about £1,500. In each case, the saving is equivalent to about 12·5 per cent. of the full annual rates bill of the property concerned. For larger properties, the gains could be even more substantial. A property with a new rateable value of around £50,000 could save more than £6,000 over the next two years.

In 1955, a new revaluation based on the state of the property market as at 1 April 1993 will come into effect. Given the downturn in the market since 1 April 1988—the valuation date used for the last revaluation—rental values in those sectors which have been worst hit by the recession may be lower than in 1988. If so, rateable values will fall at the next revaluation. That means that some businesses still in transition in 1994-95 towards the highest rate bills implied by the 1990 valuation, might never reach those bills. The present pause in the increases will be especially helpful in such cases, and I am sure that all hon. Members will welcome that measure.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): My hon. Friend the Minister has touched on a point that is of great concern to many businesses in my constituency, particularly in the shops and hotel sector, where the revaluations introduced two or three years ago mean that it would take about 15 years at the current rate of progress for those valuations to work through. While the pause is very welcome and has been extremely popular, there is a great worry that, in two or three years' time, businesses will face massive increases in their bills. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that that will not occur?

Mr. Redwood: I am aware of the problem. As my hon. Friend illustrates, the problem is not confined to the south. It also affects many towns and settlements in the north. I will repeat the assurance that I have just given. If, on the date of the next revaluation, the values in 1988 turn out to be peak values, and next year's values are lower, that of course will be reflected in 1995 in the bills that businesses in my hon. Friend's constituency will have to pay. They will never have to pay those very high bills based on the 1988 values if those values turn out to be peak values, which, in some cases, I believe will be the case. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend.

Mr. Greenway: Will my hon. Friend assure the House that the phasing will continue? We are likely to face a situation in which even the 1988 values may only be halfway through being implemented. If those values are confirmed in real terms—one expects that there will be valuation changes across the country—businesses are seeking an assurance that the phasing will be continued.

Mr. Redwood: I will answer that nearer the time. I have told my hon. Friend that the important relief that would arise is if the values turn out to be lower at the next valuation. In some cases, I believe that that will prove to be the case. Those businesses will never have to pay the high values based on the 1988 valuation if the current decline in the property market is confirmed at the time of the 1993 valuation.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): Perhaps we can make sure that we understand this absolutely correctly. Is the Minister suggesting that there will be a permanent transitional period which, ad infinitum, continues like a moving staircase, with no one ever reaching the valuation that was originally set because of the transitional arrangements and because the next valuation will overtake the first one before people have reached it?

Mr. Redwood: I am not making any changes in the transitional arrangements as a result of the Bill, other than having a pause for one year in the introduction of the transitional increases in the way that I have described. I have already been very specific about what would happen in the case of a business property if the value in 1993 to become effective in 1995 turned out to be lower than the value in 1988. Whatever the transitional arrangements, that would mean that that business would never have to pay the full amount implied by the 1988 valuation, because it would have been overtaken by the events of the subsequent valuation. Many hon. Members will welcome that and believe that it is a positive step forward for businesses in their constituencies.

Many businesses which benefited most from the 1990 reforms have had their reductions phased in to offset the cost of protecting those facing increases. The rate at which the gains have been coming through has been increasing since 1990-91, and we have decided to increase them further—by 3 per cent. in England and 13 per cent. in Wales—in 1992-93.

The Bill provides that all remaining gains will flow through in 1993-94. All businesses which gained from the reforms will soon see the full benefits. I hope that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) will welcome that. Far from prolonging the transition, where there are winners, we are accelerating it. I hope that the Opposition will welcome that.

We estimate that 60,000 manufacturing properties, many in the north of England, will share more than £40 million in additional rate reductions this year as a result of the measure. Sixty-five thousand shops and offices will also gain, with reductions of more than £12 million. In total, 150,000 business premises will benefit to the tune of around £85 million in the current year. For an individual property with a new rateable value of just under £10,000, that could mean a reduction of about £180 in this year's bill, and for a property with a new rateable value of around £50,000, the saving could be as much as £580.

One further change will provide significant help for a number of businesses which are trying to dispose of property in the recession. At present, transitional protection for those facing rate increases is lost when a property changes hands. The Bill will fulfil our pledge to remove that restriction with effect from 11 March of this year.

Taken together, those measures will mean that no business will face a rise in rate bills this year in real terms. In the 1980s, business suffered from a 37 per cent. rise above inflation under local rates. The Bill provides a much better deal for many. If local rates had stayed, business would have paid £1,000 million more in 1990-91 and £850 million more in 1991-92. That shows the value of the changes that we have made. The Bill would increase benefits to businesses by a further £1,300 million over the next three years. I commend it to the House.

7.37 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): This is my first opportunity to congratulate the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities on his new appointment. Whatever this philosophical and ideological background, I hope that he will bring fresh thinking and a new spirit of partnership to the relationship between local and central Government. I hope also that he will bring a degree of sanity and clarity to a system that has seen so many transitions, gearings and crankshafts over the past 13 years——

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): No, just cranks.

Mr. Blunkett: As my hon. Friend has pointed out, we have certainly had cranks. We have had nothing as clear cut or as craftsmanlike as a crankshaft, as I know from the production lines in my constituency. Instead, we have had one cobbled-together solution after another.

Although we do not oppose the proposals in the Bill, we are obliged to point out what a shambles the system has been. First, we had a delay in the valuation process which was substantially responsible for ensuring that industries and productive parts of our economy were penalised long after the valuation of the sites and rental values of the premises on which they were reliant had ceased to be relevant in terms of the economy of the north of England, the midlands and Wales.

The need for an urgent revaluation led to considerable dislocations because of the dramatic changes. Attention has already been drawn to the fact that the valuation base was 1 April 1988, at the height of the boom. The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) validly raised with the Minister what would happen. We had an interesting reply, that given that the transition goes through to the date when the new valuation will apply, and given that next year the new valuation base will apply, property and rental prices could change dramatically and people will never have to pay on the valuation that was adjudged to be right from April 1988.

Given that we are aware of helping the Government to avoid pitfalls and the misfortunes of what is no longer local government finance in the strict sense of the term but centrally raised Government finance for local government, let us surmise for a moment that, under the new valuation, there are such substantial gains for some and such unwarranted losses for some commercial and industrial properties that a new transitional arrangement has to be brought in. Those who were to be penalised so heavily under the 1988 revaluation base and who now find themselves with a revaluation below that level, and who, in the Minister's words, would never actually reach the original threshold, will find themselves so badly penalised in the recession next year that they will be entitled to special help.

Because there are others who are gainers, and because losers have to have their losses phased in, we need a new transitional period in which those who thought that they would gain only slowly, as they have done since the 1990 change, and those who thought that they would lose only in phases in order to protect their businesses, as has been the case since April 1990, the whole dog's dinner will continue through until we reach the base from which the third revaluation will take place. Presumably the merry-go-round will start all over again and the people who thought that they would gain the most benefit will not gain and the people who would incur the greatest losses will be protected from reaching their losses. It will carry on ad infinitum.

That absurdity is brought about by the original lengthy delay, the failure to appreciate the consequences of the revaluation and the failure, until tonight, to acknowledge that there is a major problem arising out of the date chosen, at the height of the property-led boom—a boom which has now been shown to be transitory—and a failed promise of economic prosperity and regeneration. Of course, property prices and the inability to let property, particularly in places such as Canary Wharf and the difficulties that are being experienced in docklands, underline the extent of the collapse in the property market and the real problems of our economy.

I shall never forget sitting on a tube and hearing two people discussing what was in the *Financial Times* that morning. It is always instrumental to sit on an underground train in the morning, if one can get a seat. The two obvious City finance experts were discussing when they would acknowledge that there was a real problem for the British economy. One of them said that it clearly would not be when industry in the north of England cried even louder and there was higher unemployment. The other said, "No, but a clear sign will be the collapse of the London property market." That occurred some time ago. Olympia and York is an example. What a cockeyed economy it is that is based on such precepts.

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks that were kind towards me—I think that some of them were kind.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): Just a few.

Mr. Redwood: Just a few, perhaps. Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who welcomed the revaluation and said that the Government are taking a very important step? If so, is he now saying that Labour party policy is to have no transitional protection whatsoever? That would be of great interest to businesses which welcome transitional protection. Far from thinking that the measure is a dog's breakfast, they think that it is an essential protection given the increases in values that some of them face.

Mr. Blunkett: Revaluations are not a dog's dinner, it was the system and the way in which the Government implemented it over the past 13 years, including the domestic and non-domestic changes. My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) rightly said that we welcome the changes. They are long overdue in terms of assisting many hard-pressed areas and ensuring that business does not pay more than it can afford given valuations and the rental of the sites on which its activities are based. Of course we accepted that, given the enormity of the change, there had to be transitional arrangements. We are seeking to get those things right.

At the beginning of October, the Minister's predecessor acknowledged that there were 673,000 outstanding appeals under the unified business rate appeals system. I have no evidence that that level has dropped. Evidence in the early part of this year showed that there was greater awareness by businesses of the problem that they were facing. In February, the London Chamber of Commerce

showed quite clearly that three out of four enterprises in London were going to be losers and declared itself to be extremely unhappy with the situation.

We welcome the general approach. We also welcome the Government's ability to find money when it suits them. We welcome the fact that we are talking about £1·3 billion of Government expenditure—only a few weeks, of course, after the Government vilified the Labour party for daring to favour interventions by public resources to help industry and commerce to recover—any resources that would have to be found by the Exchequer to invest in our economy and our country.

The hypocrisy beggars belief. In the six weeks leading up to the calling of the general election, Government spokesmen announced more than £2 billion of new expenditure—we have new expenditure before us tonight —and then attacked the Opposition for being in favour of new expenditure. Regrettably—we and the Government's friends in the media must take some share of the blame —we were responsible for not getting the message across about the hypocrisy which exists on the Conservative Benches when it comes to deciding where public expenditure should go.

We welcome the belated measure to recognise what we have been pressing for all along. I must emphasise that we pressed that those who would gain—it applies to large parts of the country where manufacturing industry and real productive industries are struggling to survive—should be able to have their gains immediately the revaluation came in. They should have been enabled, with a measure that was not interventionist in the sense of distorting the market but was interventionist in terms of helping productive economic capacity, to be alleviated from a fixed cost, which we recognise is difficult in a recession. When we are in a boom and profits are being made, rates are discountable against corporation tax, and when they are not that forms a substantial problem of liquidity for many industries.

It is time that we in the Labour party spelled out an historical commitment which has often been misunderstood. It is time that we spelt out that we are in favour of productive manufacturing industry.

By backing those who use their enterprise and initiative, we follow in the role that was a traditional and vital part of the growth of the skill trade unions and the Labour movement. Tonight I wish to reiterate that by saying that it is an important role for the Labour party of the 1990s to advocate and champion the small business, the self-employed, those seeking self-reliance and self-determination and people who are willing to use enterprise and innovation not merely for their benefit but in the interests of the well-being of the community in which they live. That is our historic role.

We back productive industry against the freeloaders —the people who thought that they could make a quick buck in property development or on the stock exchange. It is our role to back the little man and woman against the vested interests of big business, international finance and corporate interests which know no boundaries and care little about the communities or individuals with whom they deal. If we assert that role more clearly people will understand that we are speaking with them and on their behalf. With the growth of self-employment and self-reliance in the 1990s we shall take on the Conservative party and defeat it.

Our role in defending small businesses is the reason why we advocated rate rebates for small businesses. It is the reason why we said that people who are struggling to get into business and make a living for themselves need help in paying the rates to pay towards community provision. It is why we said that those who were struggling to stay in business should be entitled to a rate rebate and that small shops on housing estates and in villages and towns should be supported and enabled to stay in business in the face of the vagaries of the big shopping complexes with which many local neighbourhood centres have to compete.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): The hon. Gentleman gives a great litany of the advantages that the Labour party would bring to small businesses. As I recall, one of the Labour party's policies for small businesses was to give control over the rate level back to the local councils in which businesses are located. The local council in Hammersmith and Fulham raised the rate by almost 50 per cent. when the Labour party took power in 1986. That was an amazing attack on small local businesses. The hon. Gentleman cannot possibly support giving control of the taxation of small businesses back to spendthrift Labour local authorities.

Mr. Blunkett: It is interesting that the Institute of Directors, which is not known for its radical socialist thinking, and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce are in favour of decentralising the business rate. They are in favour of it because they genuinely believe in partnership. They do not just mouth platitudes. Ministers preach responsibility but deny it. They call for increased opportunity but stifle it. They talk about partnership but withhold the means and motivation to make it possible.

Real partnership means that those who are elected at local level and are responsible to local people must work with their local business community. In the 1980s, people learned and understood that lesson well. When the business rate was centralised there was more partnership in Britain than there had been for many a long year. Breaking that partnership was a foolish and unhelpful act. It diverted the concentration of mind of local politicians from the reality that local business and its community sink or swim together. I remember that time in the 1980s well. Separately, neither can survive, because business needs decent education and training, fit housing, good public transport and an environment in which people are proud to live. The local community needs the enterprise and yield which business provides if social provision is to be a likely proposition.

We need decentralised structures so that people can work together. Of course, if we had won the election and decentralised the business rate, we should have had to fix the business rate for next year. This Bill would have been about the process of decentralising the structures to local level and fostering and encouraging responsibility.

Why is it, I ask the Minister and his colleagues, that other countries in Europe and throughout the world can accept the responsibility that must fall on local people and their elected representatives, but Britain cannot? Are we so immature politically, so inept in our democracy and so lacking in vision or foresight that we must treat local councillors and their electorates as if they were tiny

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children while we in the House can be seen as responsible, mature, adult people who know best? It is nonsense, and we all know it.

One day we shall have to return to a decentralised structure. I shall tell the House why. The gearing effect of the present structure is causing havoc with the provision of local services and the sensible financing that is necessary to achieve it. The gearing effect is created by the fact that, in England, 86 per cent. of local government expenditure is fixed by central Government. In Wales, the figure is even greater, as my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) will spell out later. As we saw last week, even the last 14 per cent. is fixed by the capping arrangements.

When only a small percentage of total revenue can be determined locally, not only is a gearing effect created whereby local councils have to raise a great deal more from that small percentage to take account of even the most modest percentage increase in their expenditure but major distortions are created. That was true in the case of the world student games in Sheffield. Business gained from the investment undertaken but made no contribution to the revenue costs incurred. That was regretable.

A second factor is a lack of ability to compensate for the ills that afflict local communities when major new developments occur which have some beneficial consequences but also have knock-on effects with which we are all familiar. I give one example from my constituency. The Meadow Hall shopping complex is an excellent and well produced development, which cost hundreds of millions of pounds, but the consequences for the city centre have been devastating.

In any sane society, the revenue raised from the new development in Sheffield would have been available to compensate for the action necessary to refurbish and renew the city centre. That would make possible a partnership with the chamber of trade to revamp shopping sites and shopping centres to bring life back to the city centre. As we have seen from north America, that is vital if we are to prevent the decay and decline which leads to the squalor that urban policy is supposed to overcome but which sensible planning and economic policies could avoid in the first place.

Mr. Redwood: On the point that the hon. Gentleman raised about the protection of businesses from high-spending, high-taxing Labour authorities, he might like to remember that, when the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was asked what would happen if local authorities whacked up the business rate if they were given local control, he said that that might be a problem. Indeed it would be. We saw it before. That is why the changes were introduced. We saw it in Sheffield, where a high tax was imposed on business. We would like to know Labour's answer to that problem.

Mr. Blunkett: I am sorry that the note or whatever the Minister scribbled on reached him so late. I had moved well on from the point about decentralisation of the business rate which the Minister's hon. Friends made. I had moved on to how one aspect of local government revenue raising can compensate for the disadvantages which arise in a complicated local economy where local people know best and can decide for themselves.

However, I shall take the question head on. The responsibility that local people feel about how crucial the wealth-creating aspects of their local economy are to the well-being of the community—in terms of the provision of services—weighed heavily with politicians of all political parties as we reached the end of the 1980s. It reached a point where many people acknowledged that efforts to hold down the rates, and subsequent efforts to hold down the poll tax, were clearly evident. Until 1985, capping did not exist but there was not a calamity. Often the will to do the job together existed. That will must be reintroduced and reshaped in the future. That is why the Institute of Directors, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and, at one phase, the Confederation of British Industry were in favour of that genuine partnership at local level.

We cannot oppose the Bill, but it is a missed opportunity to do a good job on behalf of businesses and their communities, by getting rid of the gearing impact —in its substantial form—by restoring some sense to local authority finance, by broadening the tax base and decentralising the business rate, by having rebates for small businesses and by ensuring that the gains that companies have had to wait for are introduced immediately.

More importantly, we also believe that, when introducing the council tax next year, the Government should recognise the need to integrate the two systems. There will be a domestic property tax and there will have to be an equalisation formula for the distribution of grant and compensation which is needed to take account of the different rate bases throughout the country.

Some regions have lost heavily. My own Yorkshire and Humberside region lost £289 million in a full year in business income to the local authorities together with the withdrawal of the equalisation grant. That is a large sum of money, for which the local authorities have desperately tried to compensate, even under the poll tax capping regime.

I know that some Conservative Members with expertise in local government will recognise the importance of the reintroduction of equalisation, and unless those things are taken together, we will again have missed an opportunity to get it right.

In the past 13 years, there have been so many wrongs in local government finance. Let us hope that some sense will prevail and that the Government will take the opportunity to listen and to learn.

8.2 pm

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton): I congratulate the new Secretary of State for the Environment on his appointment and thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to address the House.

I believe that it is in the best tradition of maiden speeches that I pay tribute to my predecessors, and I do so warmly. However, there has only been one previous Member for Nuneaton, because, before 1983 and the Boundary Commission's changes, the constituency was Nuneaton and Bedworth. For many years Frank Bowles, later to become Lord Bowles in the other place, held that constituency. When Frank Bowles retired, Frank Cousins held the seat for a short time. I well remember that. As the voting age was then 21, Frank Cousins was the first person

that I was old enough to vote for. I remember him touring our estate in an old, yellow, open-topped Rolls-Royce—very smart it looked too.

Then Mr. Leslie Huckfield became the Member of Parliament for Nuneaton, and I am sure that the House will remember him. He went on to that House over the water for a short spell.

My predecessor was Mr. Lewis Stevens, who was the Member for Nuneaton from 1983. I believe that he was a quiet but hard-working and conscientious Member of the House, and I think that he was well respected on both sides of the Chamber. From looking at the records, I understand that he had the eighth best voting record in the last Parliament. He was a very diligent Member. However, it might have been better for the people of Nuneaton if there had been some more "no" votes in that record—they were all "yes" votes—especially in the votes on the financial strangulations of the poll tax and the discredited standard spending assessments that have burdened local government in the past few years. In every other respect, I believe that Lewis Stevens served his constituents to the best of his abilities and was well respected by them for it.

I agree with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on the Bill. I shall certainly not oppose what has been put before the House. However, we should all recognise that all parts of the local community have a role to play to ensure good services and an infrastructure most suited to the community's inhabitants and to the industries and commerce that flourish within it.

Those two links are important. One cannot ignore the fact that people who live in a community are employed there in commerce and in industry. There is an historic and traditional link, started by the Rowntrees, who believed that people needed good services, homes and education, because that was better for the companies employing them. I think that that is still as true as it was then. In the fullness of time, history will repeat itself.

During the past two years, constituencies such as Nuneaton, which is in Warwickshire, have suffered from reduced Government grants and the SSAs, which have led to capping—I asked the Minister a question on capping in this place last week. They have meant some real hardships for people in my constituency, hardships that they are suffering and that they will probably continue to suffer. With the threat of another £6 million of public expenditure being taken away from them, none of my constituents know, with any assurance, what the future means for them.

Some elderly people live in authority-run homes in my constituency, but those homes are now being sold off by the local authority. The police authority has had inadequate resources. I know that one Conservative member of Warwickshire county council had his knuckles rapped sharply in the last round of public expenditure talks, when he rebelled against his group and said that the police authority needed extra money. He was not on his own: his colleagues in the social services and education departments were saying exactly the same about their services.

The fire and rescue services in my constituency are so under-funded that the Home Office, with its formula, is questioning their viability.

Education is one of the great things that we have all benefited from, and the education service is suffering at all levels from inadequate resources, which means fewer teachers, leading to higher pupil-teacher ratios. That, combined with cuts in the budgets for equipment, means that we are denying young people rights to the best education possible. Lest we all forget it, we only come this way once. We are only young once, and it behoves us all to ensure that everyone has the right to equal opportunity in education because that is the key to our future in the Chamber and to the work of commerce and industry.

Not only is that right being denied but this year, for the first time, young people in Nuneaton will be put at risk because many of the professional services that have run the youth service in Warwickshire so successfully for many years will be cut. Youth service leaders have taken people through the Duke of Edinburgh's award schemes year after year, and they are extremely saddened that their future ability to do so will be greatly diminished.

Nothing in the Queen's Speech gave any hope to those constituents who are either homeless or inadequately housed—there are many of them. Nothing in the speech gave local councils the ability to build the houses that would meet the needs of those people and thus create employment in the construction-related industries.

While I am the Member representing Nuneaton, I shall seek to protect and further local government, and to bring it closer to the people, which includes industry and commerce. I remember my years as leader of Nuneaton borough council. Year by year, I faithfully consulted the leaders of industry and commerce before the council set the rate. The leaders of industry and commerce often told me that I was not spending enough on the infrastructure that they so badly needed to make their industries flourish. It is crucial for the democratic process in this country that all parts of the community play a full and cohesive role.

I shall also seek to look after the needs of industry and ensure that they are not ignored or overlooked. I will ensure that the voice of the people of Nuneaton will not go unheard in this Chamber.

8.11 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): I congratulate the Minister on his new role and the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Olner) on his maiden speech. The hon. Gentleman may not know it, but I have three rather tenuous links with him. First, for my sins, I went to the same school as Leslie Huckfield. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman's Liberal Democrat opponent in the recent election is one of my colleagues on Gloucestershire county council. The third link is that Gloucestershire county council, like Warwickshire county council, faces capping.

It is unlikely that many Opposition Members will argue against the Bill. Any measure that promises to reduce business costs by £480 million this year must be good news, given that business has been so buffeted by the longest peacetime recession since the 1930s. The introduction of the uniform business rate, with its revaluation, came at the worst possible time for business. Interest rates were high and consumer demand was plummeting, but the Government asked some businesses to endure massive increases to their fixed costs.

In Cheltenham, dozens of small commercial units are lying empty. At a meeting at the end of last year, the former Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs was asked to help the local business community. There was much talk from him about the small business start-up packages, but a good friend of

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mine, a Cheltenham business man and former Conservative councillor, told the Minister that he needed a business survival package to save his existing small business.

A cut in the UBR now has sadly come too late for many businesses, but it is a welcome recognition of past sins. It is sorely needed by many firms which are still struggling and which cannot see an end to this awful recession. The welcome cut in business taxation creates a dilemma for the Government. They have said that the recession is over. If that is so, why are they hurrying to cut business taxes? On April 28, the Prime Minister told the Institute of Directors that he was

"more confident than ever that recovery is under way."

I hope that he is right. On 12 May, the Prime Minister told the House:

"Since polling day we have a dramatic change in the confidence of the markets and individuals."—[*Official Report*, 12 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 496.]

If recovery is under way, why make such temporary reductions? If there has been a dramatic change in confidence, why are the Government spending half a billion pounds on boosting business? Either the Government do not believe their own rhetoric on the recession, and they realise, as Liberal Democrats realise, that the recession is still hitting many businesses, or they proposed the cut in the business rate for other reasons.

On 13 March, the *Municipal Journal*, perhaps mischievously, thought that it knew the real reason for the cut in UBR. It stated:

"One benefactor from the budget boost to small businesses is forecast to be the former environment secretary and Tory Party chairman Chris Patten, who is defending a slender 1,412 majority in Bath."

I am glad to note that, despite the result in Bath, the Government have not decided to drop the proposal, because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) will testify, the UBR is still causing small businesses great problems. Any measure designed to mitigate the impact of the recession, however late in the day, must be welcome.

This debate is surely an opportunity to ask where the Government should go with UBR now the election is over and to examine how the Bill could be improved. Ideally, the control of non-domestic rates should be decentralised —or perhaps it is better to say, denationalised. Business rates, whether levied on the property or land, should be raised by local councils and not central Government. This happens in most other European countries which realise that differences in local business tax rates are not as distortive as some people have suggested..

Where there are lower business taxes, land prices and rents will adjust to remove any benefits. Moreover, if business taxes are local, the local authority is far more likely to have a closer relationship with the business community, and therefore to understand the needs of local business. A small business man in Cheltenham has a far greater opportunity to talk to his councillor—he may even be a councillor—than he does of talking to the Minister.

I should not be surprised if the introduction of the council tax does not force the Government into a complete rethink on this issue. With the 1991 Budget switch from community charge to value added tax, councils are now raising only a small percentage of the revenue they spend —only 14 per cent. Therefore, small changes in spending or small changes in their grant allocation inevitably lead to large changes in the local domestic tax bill.

This so-called gearing effect may make the council tax almost as unpopular as the poll tax, and, wary of yet another change in local personal taxation, the Government may then be forced into reopening the business rate debate. For the sake of the strength and vitality of local democracy, we hope that that happens.

Until the furore over the council tax begins, it is perhaps too much to hope that the Government will use the Bill to decentralise the UBR. How then could we realistically expect the Government to improve the Bill? The most simple measure would be to make larger reductions than the Bill proposes. The Liberal Democrat alternative budget proposed an overall reduction, costing £800 million in 1992-93, by simply freezing the poundage increase. That was originally proposed by the present President of the Board of Trade in September 1991.

Our proposal differed slightly in terms of the incidence of the tax reductions. It is possible that the Government's measure is more effectively targeted, although whether it is targeted more on Tory marginals than on areas of most acute distress may be debatable. If the Government's measure is better targeted, how much more effective would any additional help be if the Minister could only persuade his Treasury colleagues to give a little more leeway.

There are many other problems with the UBR that could be tackled in the Bill with some imagination on the part of the Government. The Bill at last recognises the absurdity of the original decision to restrict eligibility for transitional relief to the orginal occupier. That decision caused some ridiculous anomalies, and I will give just two examples.

Firms wanting to cut costs in the recession by moving to smaller premises found that, if they did so, any cost savings were outweighed by the increase in the rates bill that they suffered because their residency in the smaller premises would not be eligible for transitional relief. Firms coming into towns after 1 April 1990 found that their rates bills were far higher than those of a competitor across the street. In some cases, those anomalies further aggravated the already appalling state of the commercial property market.

That anomaly is to be corrected only from 10 March 1992. Why cannot the entitlement to transitional relief be made retrospective? According to a parliamentary answer given on 18 February to my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), the cost of such a proposal in England would be about £90 million. Another answer gave the cost in Wales as about £1 million. The Government should at least look at the suggestion.

Another improvement would be the restoration of the right to have a rateable value reduced if it were higher than the market rental value. The commercial property market has been through such an extreme cycle of boom and bust that many rateable values are far above current market rental values. The Government might protest that a revaluation is due within the lifetime of this Parliament. Such a response is no good to a small business desperately struggling to keep itself going. The restoration of that right could make all the difference to some firms and keep many people employed.

The Scottish issue must also be dealt with. Unlike the famous poll tax gap of the 1991 Budget, when the Government failed to apply the cut in the community

charge on an equal basis in Scotland, at least on this occasion they have remembered the existence of Scotland. But Scottish businesses are still penalised relative to English businesses through the rating system. The reduction announced in the Budget did not further close the gap between Scotland and England.

While the English business rate poundage is 40·2p, the rate poundage in Glasgow is 63·3p. In Edinburgh, it is 57·6p, and in Dundee and Stirling it is about 57p. The average Scottish poundage in 1992-93 will be 56·6p compared with the English poundage of 40·2p. The Government have two years left in which to harmonise the poundages either side of the border if they are to stick to their previous timetable. The Council of Scottish Local Authorities calculates that they will need to find a further £260 million in that period. This measure would be an opportunity to guarantee Scottish business that the Government will meet their promises on time, if not sooner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I should be grateful if the hon. Member would bear in mind the fact that the Bill is restricted to England and Wales. I hope that he will not be developing his argument too far on the Scottish dimension.

Mr. Jones: I understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Although the Bill is welcome, and we on this Bench will be supporting it tonight, it attempts to ameliorate a bad system which has caused hardship and worsened the already awful effects of the recession. If the Government want to make a proper job of atoning for their recessionary sins, there are many ways in which the Bill could be improved in detail, and we shall attempt to do so in Committee.

8.24 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment as Chairman of Ways and Means, the Minister on his appointment, and my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Olner) on his maiden speech, which I enjoyed greatly. It is good to have in our ranks another hon. Member with expertise in local government. I have no doubt that we shall hear him on many occasions in the future.

Any measure that can help businesses, particularly small ones, in England and Wales—I hope that there will be a similar Bill to assist Scotland—is beneficial. I have in my constituency many talented men and women who are self-employed and earning a decent living. They have been forced into self-employment because of redundancies, especially in the railway workshops and in other industries in Glasgow.

I have often asked people who have been made redundant, "Why do you not open a shop or some other business and employ people?" The response is often, "Having a shop means having a commitment to pay rates. It means that, whether the trade is good or bad, you know that, come Monday morning, you must find the money for the rates, apart from the other expenses." So I am glad that at least some help is being given to the business community.

I represent a Scottish constituency. I take on board, Mr. Deputy Speaker, your reference to the fact that this legislation covers England and Wales, but I must refer to the deep anxiety that exists in Scotland because the system there has meant that every five years there was a revaluation, and that led to a great gap. Examples have been given, for example, of football pitches in Glasgow and London and other major cities where a big difference exists in the rates.

Non-domestic ratepayers north of the border are bound to feel aggrieved that compensation is being given to ratepayers south of the border because the Government failed to introduce a compulsory five-year revaluation. Had such a revaluation existed in England and Wales, this measure would not have been necessary. So Scottish taxpayers' money is having to be provided for non-domestic ratepayers south of the border. I take the view that what a friend gets is no loss, but others may not share that view.

For years, and particularly in the previous Parliament, some Tory backwoodsmen kept complaining about what they described as whingeing Scotsmen being subsidised. Indeed, even one of their Lordships in the other place complained about what he called over-subsidised, whingeing Scotsmen. We are tonight discussing an area about which complaints might legitimately come from north of the border, simply because the Government failed to get the revaluation completed on a regular basis. What a blow it would have been to shopkeepers and factory owners in the south if it had been completed on time.

Reference has been made to so-called overspending local authorities. I think that I see the Minister nodding in assent over that. We must consider what is happening in areas where the recession is biting deep, as it is in my constituency. I do not accept that Strathclyde and Glasgow are overspenders. Indeed, if it were not for the local authorities, many more businesses would be going to the wall.

The Government have introduced compulsory tendering because the private sector is experiencing so much difficulty in the recession that it is moving into the public sector and obtaining local government contracts. Were it not for those local government contracts, many men and women would be out of a job.

I clearly recall that, when Margaret Thatcher came to power, a civil engineering company in my constituency was pleased. It went on record as saying that it would cut on town hall work, but within five years, the director of that company was in the House of Commons Lobby pleading for local government work to keep the company alive.

If local government spending were cut by Government edict, savings would be made not by cutting the numbers of young girls working behind the counters in the city chambers and the licensing department and on the word processors and typewriters, but rather by cutting roads contracts. Roads maintenance and street lighting would go.

The Labour party will not oppose the Bill, but if the Government constantly have a go at local authorities, they should not blame people who must pay the rates for having a go at local authorities. The Government must carry responsibility for those rates bills, because they have capped local authorities throughout the country. They should tell business men and women that local authorities are, on the whole, responsible. They are run by dedicated men and women who give their time voluntarily.

Those men and women are not like Members of Parliament. We complain of inadequate secretarial

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back-up, but they depend on their wives, sons and daughters to answer phones while they are out attending meetings. Their tea, supper and Sundays off are often interrupted because they have volunteered to serve on local government. Yet every time a Minister gets to his feet, he has a go at so-called overspending local authorities.

Tory Governments have always been keen to talk about law and order. Indeed, a maiden speech earlier tonight discussed that subject. However, the Minister must know that, because of Government cuts, the morale in our police force is in a terrible state. In 1979, if I went to a senior police officer and told him of vandalism in a certain corner of my constituency, he would offer to have extra men sent in and some officers working overtime. Consumers benefit from that. Now, officers in my local authority and, I dare say, authorities in England and Wales, say that they cannot employ the manpower necessary to protect people.

The other day in my constituency, a terrible thing happened. A runaway car was running around a housing estate—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) laughs, but it was not funny. Once the young vandals had stolen the car, they pushed it down a flight of stairs in a main street and killed a young woman who was coming from her home.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): I have yet to make my maiden speech, and I had no intention of participating in this debate. The hon. Gentleman is mistaken, because I was not discussing his remarks but a quite different subject. He was wrong to suggest that I was laughing at what I believe to be a serious matter. Will he withdraw his accusation?

Mr. Martin: The hon. Lady should not be engaged in conversation in the Chamber but should be involved in the debate. I understood her to be engaged in the debate. I accept that she was not laughing, but, if she was involved in a discussion with her colleague, she should not be here. Earlier this evening, hon. Members were taking part in a debate while others were engaged in private conversation. I understood the hon. Lady to be laughing at a serious point.

The so-called law and order party is not supporting the police because it is not supporting local authorities. Although some business people may say, "Three cheers, the Government will give us cheaper rates," because the Bill will provide some respite, the same shopkeepers and factory owners will go to their group leaders, the Lord Provost and lord mayors asking why their companies are being vandalised. They want to know why, when their vans go into housing estates, they are vandalised.

The answer will be that there is inadequate coverage for the police authorities. Although there will be cheaper rates for factories and shops, what will we do about the shopkeepers who sometimes come to us and say that things are so bad that they must stay the night in their shops to prevent them being broken into? What is the point of charging cheap rates when the party of law and order cannot protect the very people whom it claims to serve?

The Minister—there is a new broom in the Department—should meet the leaders of the local authorities. In Scotland, we have a convention of local authorities. I hope that the Secretary of State will meet the equivalent in England and Wales. Instead of trying to score points off one another, with the Government saying that the problems are all caused by Labour authorities and Labour authorities arguing that they are caused by the Government, why do not they get together and do something for consumers? Ultimately, the people who pay the rates, domestic and non-domestic, are entitled to the best possible service from local authorities and the Government.

8.38 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Olner) on a first-class maiden speech. His remarks were generous, and his local government background will offer much to the House. As a former leader of the borough council at Nuneaton, he gave a good survey of local government in his area.

The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) referred, rightly and wisely, to the cuts in grant to Gloucestershire county council, which have a parallel with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton about Warwickshire. The hon. Gentleman also referred to the fact that the former chairman of the Conservative party, Mr. Christopher Patten, owes his new job as governor of Hong Kong to the business rate. There is no doubt that he lost his seat on account of the devastating effect of the business rate on small traders and shopkeepers in the city of Bath.

Obviously, we welcome the Bill, so far as it goes, because it means that some of the excesses in the business rate in England and Wales will now be abolished. During the past three years, Opposition Members have said that some of the changes should have been effected immediately. I can clearly recall saying that people who are changing their business should be eligible for relief in the same way as those who have been in business in the same property for some time. The changes are to be welcomed. But I echo the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) that the transitional relief schemes within both the business rate and the poll tax have brought much uncertainty to the way in which local government finance is regarded in Wales and England.

The new Under-Secretary of State for the Environment will have to answer questions about the Principality of Wales. I intend to target most of my remarks on Wales. However, I am sure that he will meet the challenge, as he has done during the years that he and I have served on Standing Committees.

I understand that 30,000 business rate bills in Wales are likely to be frozen as a result of the legislation, 7,000 businesses are to have their reductions speeded up and 35 per cent. of business properties are to benefit. We welcome those improvements. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brightside said, we wonder where the money is coming from, as the shortfall in Wales is to be made up by Welsh Office grants—£25 million in this financial year, £22 million next year and £13 million the year after.

The money for some of the transitional relief schemes that we have been told about during the past year or so seems to come from nowhere. We welcome the schemes and the money behind them, but I and other hon. Members, such as my hon. Friend the Member for

Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin), wonder why the money could not be found for other important services such as the police force. I echo the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Springburn about law and order. The whole of south Wales, from the city of Swansea to the Wye valley, has been allowed only one extra policeman for this current year. I am sure that, if the £25 million could be found, the money for more policemen could be found.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brightside referred to rebates. We believe that the business rate should relate to the ability of business people to pay it, as the individual's council tax or poll tax relates to his or her ability to pay it. That is why we argued at the general election, and still do, that rebates of up to 100 per cent., related to the profitability of businesses with an annual turnover below a specific level, would be welcome. The business rate as it stands is nothing more than a business tax. It is not a rate, as it bears no relation to how rates used to operate or the new council tax is to operate. The business rate is a national tax imposed on business people.

Earlier, we heard exchanges across the Floor of the House on the former business rate levied by local authorities. Of course, some local authorities will spend more than others—that is the ways of things—but if we accept that democracy must be genuine, and local, we must acknowledge that all the benefits of a local business rate in linking the local business community with the local community itself are valuable. Local authorities provide an educated work force, roads, infrastructure, firefighters, housing, environmental services and, particuarly in Wales, important developments in relation to local businesses and general economic development.

The business tax seems unrelated to the commercial activity of a given district. Some 20 or 30 years ago, the great Llanwern steelworks was placed in a rural parish in my constituency. It brought jobs and prosperity, but changed considerably the community's nature. It was right and proper that the lcoal authority should derive the benefit of the business rate from the enormous steelworks in a part of the world that was changed by its presence.

A local business tax or rate should be set, collected and used locally. I believe that that is the view of local government generally and of many business people in this country. However, in Wales, as in England, the current business rate distorts the local government finance system. Local authority associations, like many others, are deeply concerned about the different changes that local government finance in the business sector has experienced during the past few years. There is a credibility problem. Many people, both within and outside the business community, have lost confidence in the system of local government finance, whether the poll tax, council tax or business rate.

There is another problem: local authorities, strapped for cash, will encounter difficulties relating to the new change to be introduced by the Bill. The recession means that there are many cases of arrears in England and Wales which in turn burden local authorities with extra administrative costs. Only recently, the *Local Government Chronicle* said that the changes to be introduced by the Bill were unlikely to have an immediate effect due to the complexities of the computer software of local authorities.

It is important that the Bill proceeds as speedily as possible, which is one reason why we are helping it on its way. However, it is also important that local authorities should be given every possible assistance, not just financial —although that is important. They should also be given advice on how their computers and software can cope with the changes.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Brightside said, the Bill's worst consequence for the local government finance system will be on the so-called gearing effect. In Wales, every 1 per cent. increase in expense means an increase of about 9 per cent. in the poll tax or council tax. Only just over 11 per cent. of local authority income is determined by the local council. There may well be advantages, but I cannot see them.

Due to the gearing effect, if a local authority is to have a genuine revenue-raising power, the national business rate—collected in Wales and distributed in Wales from Cardiff—together with the grant system, which is crazy anyway, will mean that local councils can do virtually nothing unless they increase local taxes dramatically. The gearing effect has distorted local government finance and effectively meant that local authorities no longer have a proper revenue-raising function. That has enormous implications for the future of local democracy in Wales and England.

I hope that, when the Bill is passed and the Government set themselves the task of administering the new council tax, they will look carefully at the joint impact of the business rate and the council tax on the proper revenue-raising functions of our local authorities. Without those functions, local democracy cannot function properly.

There is a special case in Wales, as it seems that British local government reform is on the horizon. We have been told, although not yet in the House, that the Secretary of State for Wales intends to reform local government in the Principality fairly soon, a White Paper will be with us in the autumn, and the county council elections in Wales scheduled for next year may even be postponed.

If we are to have a system of unitary authorities in the Principality and if that system is to enjoy any consensus among those in Wales who understand and are involved in local government, there must be alongside it a change in the system of local government finance which means that the standard spending assessments are much more realistic. That in turn will mean that the business rate is related locally to how people raise it and how local authorities spend it.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I was a councillor when reorganisation took place. Does my hon. Friend agree that the displacement of officials will entail a fantastic cost in terms of redundancies? Last time, and ludicrously, officials made redundant from one authority immediately applied for posts in a new authority. The Government talk about saving ratepayers money, but I fear that we are in for spending another fortune.

Mr. Murphy: I agree. I, too, was involved in the last local government reorganisation in 1974. Of course, it was extremely costly; I rather suspect that the reforms in England have been postponed because of the enormous costs that they would involve. I should be interested to know how we can avoid them in Wales—I assume that they can be avoided somehow. We are told that the reforms will pay for themselves, but I confess that I have never known that happen yet. Whatever happens, the reforms will be upon us fairly soon, so it behoves the

[Mr. Murphy]

Welsh Office to examine local government finance at the same time as it examines the structure and functions of our new Welsh councils.

We cannot keep having changes and reforms in local government: it must eventually settle down. The key word now must surely be stability in local government, and I hope that the Government will think again in the months and years ahead about the importance of returning the business rate to the local authority dimension and of ensuring that local democracy is both local and democratic.

8.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): If I am a little tardy in congratulating you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is because this is my first opportunity to do so. I hope that you will have many happy years in your new post.

I also thank the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) for his kind words. He referred to shared pleasures of serving on Standing Committees. I have a strange feeling that we will be returning to those shared pleasures on this and other measures as and when they arise.

I sincerely congratulate also the new hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Olner) on what I thought was a first-class maiden speech, delivered with sincerity and conviction. He spoke generously about his predecessor, Lewis Stevens, who is remembered with affection in this House—I do not believe I am being controversial when I say that he is affectionately remembered by hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber.

The hon. Member for Nuneaton wisely highlighted the links in a community between work, housing and education. Perhaps, as a fellow paid-up member of the club of former leaders of councils, I may also welcome his contribution tonight and look forward to hearing from him again. When he mentioned SSAs, I realised that he will be welcomed into an even more exclusive club—those who wish to understand SSAs and to take part in debates on them. He will be welcome in the rarefied atmosphere surrounding such debates.

The Government are encouraged by the wide range of support for the Bill in tonight's debate, even though, perhaps predictably, some hon. Members' comments went just a fraction wider. The Bill is certainly good news for business. In a nutshell, it means that no business, whether in transition or not, will face a rate increase of more than 4·1 per cent. this year; and 150,000 businesses will enjoy reductions of up to 27 per cent.

To those who argue, as did the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones), that we could or should go further, I can only reply that this is already an exceptionally generous package, worth more than £1·25 billion over the three years concerned.

Speaking of the hon. Member for Cheltenham, whose presence we welcome, he asked a couple of questions that I would like to answer straight away. First, he asked why we are proceeding with the Bill if the economy has turned around. The answer is that the Government believe in fulfilling their promises. This was promised in the Budget and we believe that it should be carried out. Realistically speaking, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will concede, even with the economy turning round, the change will be gradual and many businesses will still face considerable pressures over the next couple of years, so we think it right that they should continue to receive the promised assistance.

The hon. Member for Cheltenham also suggested that we consider back dating the relief for properties that will benefit from having been left empty during the transitional relief stage. That would be a major exercise, and we should have to unscramble every transaction between 5 April 1990 and 10 April 1992. That would not only be chaotic—it would be undesirable, and it would involve retrospective legislation. Many businesses entered into these purchases and sales taking account of the law as it stood, and we think that it would be unfair to change the underlying ground rules now, as I hope the hon. Gentleman will agree on further reflection.

The hon. Member for Torfaen asked me one or two questions which I will try to answer. If I do not, I promise to write to him with such residual queries as he may trace——

Mr. Murphy: In Welsh?

Mr. Squire: Preferably not.

I can confirm that just under 30,000 businesses will benefit under the so-called loser clauses alone. A further 6,800 businesses will benefit by having their gains accelerated. Altogether, about 35 per cent. of businesses in Wales will be affected, at a cost of about £1 million to the Exchequer.

The hon. Gentleman made a passing reference to rates being based on ability to pay. Before 1990, the basis of local business rates was broadly the same as for NNDR, in that they were based on rateable values. To the extent that businesses will not generally be prepared to pay more in rent than they can afford, market rents and hence rateable values are linked to overall business profitability.

The Bill is certainly good news, targeting help on all businesses. If we simply aimed at small ones, we would not have been able to help some of those which face the largest increases under the 1990 reforms and the largest year-on-year changes under the transitional arrangements.

The decision to end transitional protection on a change of owner-occupier is designed to ensure that the occupiers of new buildings and the new occupiers of old buildings are treated the same. It also allows more money to flow to gainers within the total. I have already mentioned that in the Welsh context.

I should like to say a few words on transitional relief in the light of the earlier exchanges involving my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). If large increases in rates bills emerge from the 1995 revaluation, the Government will certainly consider using their powers to put in place a new transitional scheme after 1995. We have repeatedly given businesses that assurance, and I am happy to underline it again tonight.

We know that, despite the existing scheme, businesses have had problems coping in the recession. The Government have monitored the position, and have listened. We accept that the loss of transitional protection has put some brake on property changing hands; the

Chancellor's Budget announcement included an improvement in the transitional scheme, which will help businesses in difficulties with the recession and assist their return to profitability.

Mr. Murphy: Can the Minister tell us how long the transitional period is likely to last? Is there a norm, or do transitional periods go on for ever?

Mr. Squire: I sense that the hon. Gentleman was being less than helpful in that intervention. The answer is, of course, that he cannot expect me to reply to his question from the Dispatch Box tonight—but I can tell him that the Government will examine the way in which businesses are affected from year to year, and will make decisions on that basis. I hope that he will agree that that is the only intelligent way in which to proceed. As I have said, the Government recognise the possibility of a further transitional scheme if we consider such a scheme justified.

Incidentally, that momentary pause for reflection was helpful, in that I realised that I had made a slip of the tongue. I can confirm that the cost of the Welsh proposals will be £25 million in 1992-93, not the £1 million that I inadvertently mentioned a moment ago.

The Opposition parties sought to tempt us back to locally set rates. Conservative Members are not moved; we are committed to protecting business rate payers. Only last week, and again tonight, my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) drew attention to the enormous rate rise—an increase of over 100 per cent. in local rate, and of 44 per cent. in the general rate—that the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham imposed on businesses in 1987. In 1989-90, poundages ranged from 122p in Kensington and Chelsea to 400p in Sheffield. I know that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) is more than aware of that figure. We cannot go back to that.

I noted with considerable interest, and qualified agreement, what the hon. Member for Brightside said in his speech. If what I have just described could be termed the 1970s mode of the Labour party—in those days, a number of its members were quite content for businesses to be soaked, and soaked very heavily—we have now clearly moved into 1990s mode. Now, the Labour party champions small businesses. How that will blend in with the championing of the Transport and General Workers Union and other union paymasters, time will show.

Mr. Blunkett: I shall ignore that rather frivolous throwaway remark. Perhaps the Minister will reflect on where the poundage to which he has referred placed the city of Sheffield on the league table of rates paid by businesses. During the period he mentioned, Sheffield—the fourth largest city in Britain—ranked 61st on the league table. That bore no relation to the actual pence in the pound that had to be levied to raise the necessary revenue to sustain what Her Majesty's inspectorate described at the time as the best education system in Britain.

Mr. Squire: Of course I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the details of the poundages from the Dispatch Box. I can say, however, that over the years I have heard successive Sheffield Members, referring to the old system, bemoan the high cost of Sheffield's rates. I pass that on for the hon. Gentleman's information and possible edification.

We have always made it clear that, although set nationally, proceeds of national non-domestic rate would be distributed fully to local authorities. The approach in the Bill underlines that commitment. The NNDR pool will be fully recompensed for any reduction in rate yield that is due to the Bill. Local authorities will be allowed to net off reasonable costs of re-billing from NNDR payments. We shall look carefully at any evidence from authorities that NNDR payments in the first month of the year have not kept pace with the profile of payments to the Department set at the beginning of the year, and we shall consider adjustments if they prove necessary.

Local authorities will be given plenty of time to prepare for re-billing after enactment by delay in the commencement of the Act by about one month. They will be required to give refunds back to 1 April—or, in the case of transferred property, 10 March—to those who have overpaid, and to adjust future instalments downwards.

I am sure that the House will wish to see the Bill on the statute book as soon as possible, so that ratepayers can benefit from it. It gives significant help to all businesses, big and small, during the current financial year. It does so by restricting increases for all businesses, and by ensuring that those who benefited most from the 1990 reforms receive all that benefit during this year or the next. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State said when he moved Second Reading, no business this year will face a real-terms rise in its rate bills.

We believe that this is an important, targeted and necessary measure, and I urge the House to give it unanimous support tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

Committee tomorrow.

NON-DOMESTIC RATING BILL [MONEY]

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Non-Domestic Rating Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. Squire.]*

Customs Duties

9.5 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): I beg to move,

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 7) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 792), dated 16th March 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th March, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

The order implements a decision of the Governments of the European Coal and Steel Community meeting within the Council on 3 February 1992. The purpose of the decision, which is part of a package of economic measures agreed by the Community to bring an end to the conflict in the Yugoslav region, is to reinforce preferential tariff rates on imports of all ECSC categories of goods originating from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia. Such imports were temporarily subject to normal rates of duty following the denunciation of the ECSC-Yugoslav agreement and implementation of Community decision 91 588. The order does not reintroduce preferences for goods originating in Serbia.

For most industrial products, the Community's external tariff can be amended by Council regulation, which is directly applicable in all member states. For legal reasons, however, changes in the tariff related to products covered by the ECSC have to be incorporated in United Kingdom law by means of a statutory instrument through the affirmative resolution procedure. Hence the need for the order.

9.6 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I begin, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by congratulating you on your appointment. I hope that you have much enjoyment in presiding over our proceedings, whatever the subject and whatever the hour.

The subject with which we are dealing is similar to one that the Minister and I debated in Committee a few months ago when the (Amendment) (No. 6) order was considered. Against that background, perhaps I can take the opportunity to repeat some of the questions which I put to the Minister on that occasion, which I feel were not entirely answered.

We have not had a major debate on Yugoslavia, and I realise that it will not be possible to have one when considering an Order as narrow as the one that is before us. During the debate on the Gracious Speech, however, we dealt with foreign affairs. That provided hon. Members with an opportunity, quite properly, to voice their concerns about Yugoslavia.

I understand the procedure that relates to the Order, which the Minister clarified in his statement. When he replies, perhaps he will be able to say whether there is any way of speeding up the procedure or anything that would make it more effective in the face of the ever changing situation in Yugoslavia—or what, perhaps, more properly should be called the former Yugoslavia.

When we discussed these matters in Committee, several hon. Members referred to the different parts of Yugoslavia and spoke of how we should respond to the emerging republics. Only a few months ago, through the order on ECSC customs duties, we were proceeding on the basis that the whole of Yugoslavia still existed, even though it was clear that different relations with different republics were emerging on the part of the members of the European Community. It worries me that in such a rapidly changing situation some of the measures with which we are dealing through the procedures can quickly become out of date.

The order tackles the problem of trade with the different republics in the former Yugoslavia, and no longer with Yugoslavia as a single unit, but I am not sure that it actually deals with those different republics in an entirely acceptable way. It exempts all the republics from ECSC customs duties, except Serbia. However, I understand that Serbia and Montenegro are operating as one unit, even though Montenegro is exempted under the order. Perhaps the Minister could comment on that, because it appears to be rather strange.

We know that the different republics in the former Yugoslavia have evoked different responses among EC member states. Whereas many of us feel that Slovenia has done a great deal to commend itself to the European Community, there are doubts about some of the developments in Croatia—for example, many people have expressed concern about human rights there.

It is not a simple matter to deal with the different republics, so I wonder whether the Minister could enlarge on his brief statement and say what sort of discussion of these matters has taken place in the European forum and what was the attitude of the British Government to including all the republics except Serbia in the order.

Perhaps the Minister could also say a little about how the measures affect the different countries of the European Community. I know that, on the wider issue of sanctions, Greece, for example, is concerned that it might be more detrimentally affected than the various republics in the former Yugoslavia. I put that point to the Minister when we previously discussed this matter in Committee, but he did not respond. Will he now give us some details on that?

I imagine that the order is of only minor relevance to this country, but as the Minister did not say anything about that aspect, perhaps he could confirm it. Could he also tell us whether he has found it necessary to hold discussions with industry about imposing the duties on steel for Serbia, but removing them for the other republics? What was the practical effect of introducing the previous order that we discussed in Committee? Did it make any major difference to the steel trade between the different republics of Yugoslavia and the different countries of the EC? The Minister has given us no details on that.

I assume that we are dealing with modest measures that are probably insignificant within the overall trading position between the republics of the former Yugoslavia and EC countries. However, I should be grateful if the Minister could give us some feedback on how that overall trading relationship is now viewed within the EC. While I certainly sympathise with the attitude that the EC is taking towards Serbia in particular, I think that all of us believe that it is important to support all the groups in all the republics that are opposed to the war, which are seeking to preserve or to reopen the channels of dialogue and trying to achieve some sort of solidarity between the various national and ethnic groupings. I should like the Minister to deal with that matter when he replies.

Although the order is of minor importance in the overall relationship with Yugoslavia, it allows us to raise various questions—some of which I have tried to raise tonight, to which I hope the Minister will respond. The overall sanctions relating to Yugoslavia are adopted by regulation in the European Community and are

immediately binding on all the member states, so they have not given rise to debate in this House. The different procedure that applies to the ECSC allows us to raise some of these issues tonight, and I hope that the Minister will respond.

9.14 pm

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin). She is right to ask those questions. It is also right that the House should be given the opportunity to debate the tragic events in Yugoslavia. I do not intend to deal in detail with those tragic events, because the scope of the order is narrow. All I would say is that Government will continue their twin-track policy in Yugoslavia. They will give all aid, comfort and support to my noble Friend Lord Carrington in his sterling efforts on behalf of the people in that region and will also encourage the different sides in the dispute in Croatia and Bosnia to come together.

I shall do my best to answer the questions that the hon. Lady put to me. If I fail to do so, I shall be happy to write to her. She asked whether my Department had been in contact with United Kingdom importers and exporters. Our exporters face a difficult situation in Yugoslavia. They will need to reassure themselves that their customers have funds to pay for goods or services provided. That will not be easy. Many companies in the former republics have been badly hit by the present conflict, while others have money in banks outside those republics and can fund purchases with that money. Another problem is transportation of goods to the customer. The whole House will appreciate that our exporters face severe problems. My Department is ready to assist in every way that it possibly can.

The hon. Lady asked me about the impact of European Community sanctions on trade with Yugoslavia. That is difficult to quantify. The main impact on trade has been the current conflict in the former republics. That has led to the value of United Kingdom trade declining by 37·5 per cent. in the first four months of 1992, compared with the same period last year. I am afraid that I do not have figures with me relating to the value of trade lost by other European Community members, but I shall be delighted to write to her with that information.

The hon. Lady also asked me about who is to blame in this sad dispute. In our view, no side in Bosnia is without blame. The United Nations Security Council resolution 752 of 15 May calls for the withdrawal of units of the federal army and elements of the Croatian army from Bosnia. Serbs, through the federal army and irregulars, are the major aggressors.

The hon. Lady asked me why, in the light of recent developments, Montenegro is included in the list of republics benefiting from the reintroduction of preferential access. I am sure that she will appreciate that this is a sensitive issue, upon which I should not like to dwell. However, at the time that the decision was taken Montenegro was deemed to be making a positive contribution towards the peace conference. The hon. Lady will recognise that that decision was taken by the European Community's Council of Ministers in December 1991.

That leads me to the first point made by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East. She said that there is a rapidly developing situation and she was asking whether our procedures are sufficiently flexible to deal with it. We are in a difficult position, since we are committed to moving together as a Community. If one were talking about normal trade—for example, textiles—it would be possible to take a decision simply on the basis of the Council of Ministers decision. That is not possible when it comes to matters that relate to the European Coal and Steel Community. The hon. Lady will recognise that that is a much older agreement, dating back to the 1950s.

The House may find it useful if I state the exact legal position. Section 5(3) and schedule 2(4) of the European Communities Act, as amended by section 19 and schedule 2 of the Customs and Excise Duties (General Reliefs) Act 1979, require that, where an order imposes or increases any customs duty, the affirmative resolution procedure has to be used unless the duty is imposed pursuant to a Community obligation. If this order were being made pursuant to a Community obligation, the negative resolution procedure could be followed, but as, instead, the order is made pursuant to a decision of the Governments of the member states, it cannot be followed.

I apologise for that somewhat legalistic language. In layman's terms, it means that, under the European Communities Act, we must use the affirmative procedure. The Council makes a decision which comes into force and, within 28 days, the House must approve it by affirmative resolution. If the House did not approve the course of action, the order would lapse.

Such matters can usually be dealt with far more simply in Committee, but, as the debate is taking place so soon after the general election, the appropriate Committee has not been constituted. It is a rather complex legal point——

Ms. Quin: Given that the situation in what was formerly Yugoslavia is changing, is a series of meetings envisaged, within the purview of the European Coal and Steel Community, to monitor what is happening to custom duties and possibly to change the arrangements again if it is felt appropriate to do so?

Mr. Leigh: That is a fair point and I shall certainly take it on board. The House recognises that matters are moving quickly. Ministers and those who advise them will keep a close eye on the situation and, if it changes—for instance, if it becomes clear that there is a change in attitude by the Serbian Government—the Government will want to come back to the House, presumably having consulted other members in the Community, to see whether any change is appropriate. For the time being, however, we think that the order represents the best response.

The order is part of a package of measures designed to put pressure on those whom we consider to be the principal aggressors—the Serbians. We think that ours is a balanced approach. I should add that we have also recalled our ambassador to Belgrade, who is now in London. We are determined to do all that we can to help to alleviate the tragedy in Yugoslavia. The order is part of the twin-track policy to which I referred earlier.

I hope that the House will approve the order and will want once again to pay tribute to the tireless efforts of my noble Friend Lord Carrington.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 7) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 792) dated 16th March 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th March in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

Defective Housing (Gosport)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew MacKay.]*

9.23 pm

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): This is the first opportunity that I have had to address you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in your new role. I wish you well and congratulate you on your appointment. May all your Adjournment debates come up at 9.23 pm, and not much later, as many do.

I am glad to have the opportunity to raise the subject of the plight of 278 families who are living in flats and maisonettes in my constituency—specifically in flats and maisonettes that were previously in the ownership of the Ministry of Defence.

In the 1960s, John Laing, the builders, built for the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, then for the Ministry of Defence, several blocks of flats under the system of construction known as the Jesperson 12M system. That system was originally Danish and was used satisfactorily elsewhere in the United Kingdom. However, there were serious problems in Gosport. The Jesperson 12M flats and maisonettes in Gosport were not built as they were elsewhere. In Gosport, most of them were built not with internal balconies but with external balconies. The idea was to provide more internal space. That type of construction seemed to work satisfactorily when the properties were owned by the MOD.

The MOD found that it needed fewer of its properties for MOD occupation and it decided to sell some of them and to lease others. Of the properties that are causing difficulty at the moment, 275 have been leased to the borough of Gosport and provide council occupation, and 278 were sold by the MOD initially to property developers and, through them, to owner-occupiers.

All was well until one day in September 1991, when, quite unexpectedly, a balcony on one of the blocks of flats in Sephton close collapsed. The inspection that took place immediately after the collapse rapidly revealed defects in the Sephton close blocks and in other flats in the development.

The balconies were held in position by large C-shaped joints, about 3m high, secured at top and bottom by a hollow rectangular shaft which ran from the balconies into a receiving hole in the buildings where the shaft was secured by bolts. The whole of the joint structure was covered in concrete, thus making it impossible to discover whether there are defects. After the first balcony collapsed, it became necessary to shore up the other balconies with scaffolding. That remains the position today. That was the beginning of the crisis.

The Government have been helpful and, through the MOD, have provided 350 housing units which the MOD will make available to housing associations, with the MOD retaining about half the nominations for five years, so that it will be able to rehouse returning service men, should that be necessary. The other half of the 350 units will be made available to the borough of Gosport. That will ease the borough's problem in housing its tenants and will help it to carry out the necessary redevelopment. However, the people in most severe difficulty are the owner-occupiers—the residents of the 278 privately owned blocks.

The Building Research Establishment, which is responsible to the Minister, has produced a paper which states:

"We attributed the cause of the failure to the corrosion of the hollow steel fixing caused by water penetrating the cladding and being held in the shuttering and mortar/concrete encasing the steel section where it passes through the timber cladding."

The paper also states that access to the troubled area "was gained by 'opening up' the construction from the outside of the building."

It is clear from the Building Research Establishment paper that it was not possible to establish the defect prior to it manifesting itself in the most dramatic way through the collapse of the balcony.

What can the owner-occupiers do? They paid between £25,000 and rather more than £40,000 for their properties, depending on location and timing. However, they cannot sell because there is no market. One cannot sell if no one is prepared to buy and if people believe that the estate is blighted—as it is at the moment. Selling is not an option.

I pay tribute to the Minister's predecessor at the Department of the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) and to the Department of the Environment, which has been helpful in working out with Gosport borough council the possibilty of obtaining common parts grants under the housing renovation scheme. It seems that such grants will be available, ranging from £5,700 to £6,300.

A detailed scheme has been produced by Michael Dyson Associates, chartered structural engineers, of Southampton, and it seems to have some support. At the moment, the owner-occupiers are not minded to proceed along that route, because they do not regard repair as their way ahead. They want to be able to sell their housing units. I have urged the owner-occupiers to proceed along the repair route because that does not rule out other possibilities. I certainly urge them to bring together the necessary three quarters of residents in the owner-occupied blocks and to apply for common parts grants with the assistance of Gosport borough council.

The second route along which the residents may proceed is to take legal action. That, too, is in hand. It is very difficult to bring together a disparate group of 278 owner-occupiers who need initially to obtain legal aid and to obtain counsel's opinion on who they might be able to take legal action against. One possible defendant, of course, is John Laing, the builder of the blocks, who undoubtedly constructed a block with a very dangerous defect within it. Another possibility is the Ministry of Defence or its prédecessor in terms of authority for construction, the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works. Certainly the Ministry of Defence was not only responsible for having the block built but ran it for many years and was responsible for selling the block to the ultimate owner-occupiers. The Ministry of Defence might be an appropriate target for action.

Also, there are the building societies that advised the owner-occupiers when they bought. In most cases, the owner-occupiers paid a modest surveyor's fee of £75. In other words, they did not have a proper structural survey. However, there is no doubt that the owner-occupiers were encouraged to use certain building societies, particularly the Halifax building society, and there may be an implication that the Halifax itself could be liable for that reason. There is a possibility of legal action.

It is difficult to see how that process can bring about a solution in the near term. We are looking for a shorter-term solution to that terrible situation in which the owner-occupiers find themselves—that is, of not being able to sell and not being able to move. There is no doubt that the dwellings are defective, and there is no doubt that the defect was not capable of normal discovery at the time of purchase. For anyone involved in housing legislation, that should begin to ring bells because it makes one think about the Housing Defects Act 1984.

That Act is intended to cope with exactly that situation. On Second Reading of the Bill, our late lamented friend, Ian Gow, the then Minister for Housing and Construction, said:

"The purpose of the Bill is to relieve the very serious distress and financial hardship of those who, often using all their savings, have bought their homes from public sector bodies in good faith and now find that those homes, through no fault of their own, have been very seriously devalued because of faults in design and construction which have since been discovered and confirmed by the Building Research Establishment."—[*Official Report*, 26 April 1984; Vol. 58, c. 894.]

That is exactly what has happened in the case of the owner-occupiers on the Rowner housing estate.

I brought an all-party delegation from the borough of Gosport to see my hon. Friend's predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South on 11 February. It was a short meeting because it was disrupted by a bomb scare and had to be curtailed, but I put it to the Minister as forcefully as I could that the housing defects legislation should apply in the case of the Rowner flats. We from Gosport were amazed—all four of us on our side of the table remember the words very well—when the Minister's adviser said that the defect in the flats was discoverable at the time of construction.

I gather that that statement was denied subsequently, and we are told that the official said that the defect was discoverable at the time of purchase. However, that is not particularly significant to my case. The Minister ruled out the best route for my constituents, which is to use the housing defects legislation to require the local authority to buy their housing units at 95 per cent. of the defect-free price. That is what my constituents want.

The Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), who will answer the debate, has written to me, again referring to the meeting on 11 February. In his letter of 6 May he said:

"Defects legislation was reserved for dwelling types with serious inherent structural defects which could not have been known about or discovered on survey at time of purchase".

I maintain that that is exactly what we have here, unless my hon. Friend has someone in his Department who is so clever that he can see through concrete. There was no way of discovering the defects. They arose as a result of water seepage through the concrete which corroded the metal within the concrete. No one could have discovered those defects until suddenly the balconies collapsed. I maintain that, on discoverability, the Rowner balcony flats fall precisely within the terms of the housing defects legislation.

I suppose that it could be maintained that the Jesperson 12M class generally did not have defects. Of course that is true, but the flats constructed with balconies in Gosport, of which there are several hundred, had defects. Therefore, I maintain that the proper class is Jesperson 12M with balconies, as constructed in Gosport. I see no reason why that should not be accepted as a proper class.

In his letter of 6 May, my hon. Friend the Minister pointed out that my constituents would be better off if they had their properties repaired than if they took advantage of the housing defects legislation to have the houses repossessed. He said that it would cost some £7 million to have the houses repurchased under the housing defects legislation, whereas it would cost only £1 million to repair them under the house renovation scheme. He says that the latter would be better from their point of view.

I walked around the area again last weekend and spoke to some of the residents. I can tell my hon. Friend that that is not what they want. I put it to him that it is not for him to tell me what I should tell my constituents is best for them. I am telling him on behalf of my constituents that they desperately want the opportunity to sell their flats and maisonettes under the housing defects legislation.

When our friend Ian Gow moved the Second Reading of the Housing Defects Bill, he said that he had had many letters describing the moving cases of people who were unable to sell their houses and flats—people in the most difficult situation. No case could possibly be worse than that of my constituents. They feel that they are stuck with blighted flats and maisonettes. Some of them work for the Ministry of Defence and have been relocated to other jobs in Bath or elsewhere. They cannot move. It is intolerable for them. Therefore, I ask my hon. Friend to think again.

If the advice that my hon. Friend has been given leads him to believe that he cannot designate the properties, I ask him to look again at that advice and the facts that back it up. I ask for designation under part XIV section 528 of the Housing Act 1985. If my hon. Friend discovers that he cannot designate the flats and maisonettes, that it is not policy for him to do so or that the law does not allow him to proceed along that route, I ask him to do exactly what my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) did in 1982 when he realised that a special case had to be made of the Airey type of construction, and introduced emergency legislation.

I also ask my hon. Friend to do exactly what Ian Gow did in 1984 and to introduce legislation which will help a further group of 28 classes of housing. I ask my hon. Friend to be responsive to the special problem of my constituents. I have met them, and they are essentially decent, reasonable and deeply worried people. They are our kind of people. They are the kind of people who are anxious to get on the escalator of house ownership. They bought their first property, and it has let them down. I believe that the Government owe them some help.

9.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I fully appreciate the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), and I shall endeavour to deal in full with the issues that he has raised. My predecessor, my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) met my hon. Friend and members and officers of Gosport borough council early this year. A further meeting was subsequently held with my noble Friend the Earl of Arran, the then Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces. That allowed ministerial colleagues to explore the issues involved in detail and to prepare a way forward which, it was hoped, would provide constructive assistance to the owners of the flats in as short a time as possible.

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

The facts are these: the defects in the balconies could and should have been discovered at purchase; but, that aside, at the second meeting with ministerial colleagues, Gosport council's officers confirmed that the owners should be eligible for 100 per cent. grant aid.

However, judging by various comments that have appeared in the media and elsewhere, misunderstandings persist and I therefore welcome the opportunity to set the record straight. I am also grateful for the chance to set the advice that we have alread given within the wider context of the Government's policy on ex-public sector housing stock in which structural defects become apparent.

Whatever their construction, all older houses may have defects. Sometimes they will be trivial and sometimes more serious, but, provided that they are recognised, the buyer will be able to take into account future maintenance and repair costs likely to be associated with the defects and to reflect those costs in the price that he or she is prepared to pay for the property—they may even decide not to purchase. That is why we advise all local authority tenants contemplating the right to buy to obtain an independent survey, and why we warn them that a survey carried out by the lending institution is for valuation purposes only and will not necessarily reveal structural problems. That is sound advice for any prospective purchaser. We then expect owners to make proper provision for future repair and maintenance.

Where serious, inherent, structural defects exist which could not possibly have been known about or discovered in a survey at the time of the purchase, that is a different matter. Research in the early 1980s by the Building Research Establishment revealed defects of that type in a number of prefabricated, reinforced concrete house types designed before 1960. As a result, owners who had bought from the public sector in good faith experienced a substantial loss of value. So, in 1984 the Government, with all-party support, introduced the housing defects legislation to ensure that their houses could be designated as inherently defective, and the owners could be assisted.

The BRE has since investigated the range of system-built dwellings in this country, but it has found no further types that meet the criteria that I have outlined. Last year's efficiency scrutiny of the legislation concluded that any further designations were highly unlikely.

The Jespersen 12M form of large panel system—LPS—construction, used in the flats at Gosport, was among the types surveyed by the BRE. Its report of LPS dwellings in 1987 revealed no cases of flats or houses which were structurally unsound, but BRE warned owners and purchasers to check that LPS buildings had been constructed to the standard system and that no one-off variations were present. Clearly, if such variations existed, they would need further investigation.

When the balcony failures occurred on the Rowner estate last year, Gosport borough council wisely called in BRE to advise, and it found that the balcony design was unique to the estate and represented the sort of variation that it had warned might exist. It further concluded that the crucial fixing detail was highly vulnerable to rain water penetration and the uncovery work that it then carried out confirmed that severe deterioration of the metal supports, through corrosion, had indeed taken place. However, there is no evidence that the flats, which were built to the standard Jespersen system, had any such problems.

I understand that the cost of replacing the balconies will fall far short of the substantial reduction in notional overall value required by the housing defects legislation and that the defective detail does not meet the policy criteria for designation. Ministers have clearly and consistently been advised that any building professional carrying out a structural survey on the flats could and should have recognised that the balconies were non-standard, realised the extreme vulnerability of the fixing details, and advised that uncovery work would be necessary to determine the current condition of the fixing.

We do not know what structural surveys, if any, were carried out when the flats were first sold, as found, on the open market by the Ministry of Defence to the three original property companies. Nor do we know whether the present owners commissioned such surveys when the flats were subsequently sold on. Various allegations have been made, but clearly it would not be right for me to comment further on questions of liability that might ultimately be for the courts to decide.

My hon. Friend has suggested that the detail should have been seen as vulnerable at the time the flats were constructed. As he knows, no such statement has been made by my professional advisers, but even if that were true, it would merely reinforce their advice that the defect could and should have been discovered on survey at the time of purchase. That should not be our immediate concern today.

The owners of leasehold flats and maisonettes are clearly in a very difficult position. Many, if not all, of them will be unable to fund the cost of the necessary repair works from their own resources. As every day passes, the cost of the temporary scaffolding, erected to make the balconies safe, mounts higher and higher.

As I have already said, designation of the dwellings under the housing defects legislation would not be appropriate. Nor, as I shall show later, would it in any event be in the best interests of the owners, the council and the lending institutions that have advanced mortgages on the estate. Furthermore, as was explained to my hon. Friend and Gosport council when they met ministerial colleagues, and as I hope that I have further explained in correspondence, a better solution is to hand.

As my hon. Friend has clearly and sensibly set out, since the housing defects legislation was passed, we have introduced the house renovation grants scheme to cover properties such as those on the Rowner estate, which were not previously eligible for repair grants. Since the scheme was started in 1990, local authorities have already agreed grant aid in just less than 40,000 cases, amounting to spending of more than £100 million, and targeted on owners—such as those on the Rowner estate—who would otherwise have real difficulty in carrying out essential repairs.

As I have said, Gosport borough council's officers have confirmed that, in their view, all the affected owners could be eligible for 100 per cent. grant aid toward the cost of repairs, under the common parts provisions of the scheme. That could cost as much as £1·5 million, which is obviously a lot of money, but that is very much less than the £6·5 million that the council would need to spend to repurchase these homes at current "defect-free" valuations under the housing defects legislation.

That £1·5 million would restore the flats to the valuations that they enjoyed before the balcony failure, and the owners could keep their homes. Contrast that with the effects of repurchase under the housing defects legislation. It provides for repurchase of designated flats at 95 per cent. of the current defect-free value. I understand that those valuations would average about £25,000 a dwelling.

However, I understand that the majority of owners have mortgages well in excess of that, since they bought at the height of property prices. Figures as high as £45,000 have been quoted, and it seems clear that, after repurchase, the average owner might be left with mortgage debts of as much as £12,000 to repay, on top of any rent, and without the value of a leasehold asset.

That obviously cannot make sense. It certainly does not make sense to the lending institutions, which agree that assistance under the house renovation grant scheme is the only viable option. It surely cannot make sense either to Gosport borough council, which would, after all, have to foot the bill. Nor does it make sense in terms of overall public expenditure.

I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that the only practical way forward for the owners is for them now to submit grant applications on the basis of the repair scheme that their structural engineers have already drawn up, and which will, I understand, be considered by Gosport council's planning committee as soon as 2 June. Once that has been done, the way will be clear for the council's officers to discuss with the Department's regional office how the resource implications for the council of grant aid can best be met, and the defective balconies replaced as soon as possible.

As I and ministerial colleagues have repeatedly said, we are keen to provide constructive assistance to the owners of the flats in as short a time as possible. If they submit grant applications and enable Gosport council's planning committee to consider them on 2 June, and then to consider that matter with my Department's regional office, I hope that we shall indeed provide that constructive assistance to the owners in as short a time as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes to Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 20 May 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PITTENWEEM HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Constitutional Reform

1. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about holding a referendum on the future government of Scotland.

17. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the holding of a referendum on the future government of Scotland.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): Since 9 April 1992, I have received 24 letters about the holding of a referendum on the future government of Scotland, of which 18 were in favour. I have also received one small petition.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Secretary of State for Scotland come to Scotland United's next rally and march in Edinburgh on Saturday 6 June where he will see thousands upon thousands of Scots voicing their demand for a referendum? Perhaps he will take that opportunity to explain to them why the Government support democracy for small nations everywhere in the world except Scotland. Does he understand that we so-called Opposition Scottish Members actually represent the democratic majority in Scotland and that we have come south not to sell Scotland out but to wring from this undemocratic Westminster Parliament, by whatever means necessary in or out of this place, Scotland's democratic right to decide for itself how and by whom it is governed?

Mr. Lang: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman did not hear my original answer. I have had 18 letters in favour of a referendum. The hon. Gentleman talks about Scotland United. The football season is over and that team has been relegated.

Mr. McKelvey: Having listened carefully—*[Interruption.]*—and taken my hands out of my pockets; I often listen to Conservative Members—may I ask the Secretary of State whether he recalls that, when questioned about Northern Ireland, the Prime Minister said that he would not only answer but would accede to the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland about how they wish to be governed? Will the Secretary of State display the same courage and graciousness by telling the people of Scotland that, whatever the findings of the investigation of the wishes of the people of Scotland on their future—a process which is unlike the undemocratic farce in Ayrshire when it was found that out of 256 written submissions on opting out only 11 were in favour but he rode roughshod over people's wishes—on this occasion the matter will at least be democratic?

Mr. Lang: I say again that I have received 18 letters in favour of a referendum in Scotland. I have had an avalanche of letters supporting the maintenance of Scotland's place within the United Kingdom. In the general election we put that issue at the forefront of our campaign. The Labour party campaigned for devolution and it was defeated throughout the United Kingdom for election to a United Kingdom Parliament.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to nail once and for all the lie that there is consensus throughout Scotland for constitutional change and will he remind the House that on 9 April, Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland decisively rejected the devolution proposals of the opposition parties and that in so doing they served notice that they wanted no truck whatever with the black tee-shirt brigade from Glasgow and Dundee?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Indeed, 79 per cent. of the electorate in the general election voted against independence. I think that the vast majority of hon. Members believe that the United Kingdom should remain united.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that in the referendum on 9 April the separatists were slaughtered? Will he further confirm that a tax-raising Scottish assembly would lead to higher personal taxes in Scotland, much less inward investment and, therefore, higher unemployment?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right on all points. It is hard to have respect for a party which in its policies of 8 April was prepared to oppose a referendum, when on 9 April it lost the election and on 10 April it came out in favour of a referendum. That was not a very credible posture.

Mr. Salmond: Is the Secretary of State prepared to concede that his position during the general election was that anyone who did not vote for the Conservative party was voting to endanger the Union? By that standard, 75 per cent. of the people of Scotland so voted. In the district elections the Conservative party was out-polled by the Scottish National party. That was only two weeks ago. Will he concede that the real reason why he will not hold a referendum is that he has no confidence that his position will carry the day? Is there no sense of shame and embarrassment about the fact that a Secretary of State can continue in office, enforcing his policies against the will of the Scottish people on a mandate that can only be described as shaky, if not fraudulent?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman speaks about the will of the Scottish people. He said during the general election that his party would win 37 seats and that that would be

a mandate to negotiate independence. His party won three seats. He then told us that the district elections would be a supervote on the constitution of Scotland. His party won control of one district council by a majority of one ward, by a majority of one vote. It has since taken control of another district council on a cut of the cards. It seems that there were too many jokers in the pack.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Secretary of State accept that those of us who believe that Scotland's place remains within the United Kingdom can argue, and have the support of Scotland in so doing, that the United Kingdom is not a static concept and that there is major room for improvement and for a shift in the balance of power towards Scots running their own affairs within this country? Does the right hon. Gentleman remember that he made it clear again and again during the general election that the election in Scotland was about the status quo and that his party received the support of just over one in four of the voters? Would it not be a service to democracy and a way of settling a problem that will not go away to put the status quo to the test in a referendum? Does the Secretary of State maintain that there is no demand for change? If he does, is not the position that he is frightened of the result? Does not that explain his refusal to organise a referendum?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman was against a referendum until his party lost the general election. I remind him that 61 per cent. of the electorate in Scotland voted against the Labour party. Labour cheerfully contemplated taking power in the United Kingdom and planned to impose a Scottish assembly on the strength of the Scottish Labour vote while it had only minority power in England. It planned to do that without a referendum. The hon. Gentleman's position is entirely unacceptable.

Mr. McAllion: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Given the shameless response of the Secretary of State for Scotland, I intend to raise the matter on the Adjournment of the House.

Law Centres

2. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to increase the number of law centres in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): There are no plans at present to introduce additional law centres in Scotland from centrally provided funds.

Mr. Vaz: The Minister will recall that that is exactly the same answer as he gave when I asked a similar question on 6 February 1991, at column 276 in *Hansard*. Does he accept that there is an overwhelming case for an increase in the number of law centres in Scotland? He will realise that increasing numbers of people go to solicitors asking for help in relation to debts and social security and housing problems. Private firms of solicitors simply cannot provide the necessary advice because of the legal aid rules. Will he please ask his Department to prepare a paper to increase the number of Scottish law centres in line with the number of law centres in other parts of the United Kingdom?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We take the view that local authorities are in the best position to judge whether there is an unmet demand for legal services. They can either help to provide them from their own resources or put in a bid for urban aid. We shall certainly consider such bids sympathetically as and when they arise. Law centres have performed well where they exist in Glasgow. We have changed the law and removed the restriction on solicitors practising in law centres. If the hon. Gentleman can persuade any local authorities to take the matter forward, we shall consider seriously their bid for urban aid.

Constitutional Reform

3. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had about the future government of Scotland.

7. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Government have any plans for constitutional change in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Government are currently considering whether there are ways to continue to make the government of Scotland responsive to Scotland's needs without undermining the unity of the United Kingdom. We shall report back to the House in due course.

Mr. Galloway: That answer and the previous one, and the smirking arrogance with which the Secretary of State delivered them—with the baying ranks of English Tory Members behind him—are the cause of the anger felt in his country, the country over which he exercises power without any legitimacy. Does he not understand the contradiction between that and the Prime Minister saying yesterday that he would respect the democratic wishes of the people of Northern Ireland, or the contradiction about to be displayed in the Maastricht debate where subsidiarity —the right of people to take decisions as locally as possible —is a touchstone of the British Tory Government's policy? Those contradictions leave the Scottish Tory rump in tatters. In Edinburgh on D-day, Saturday 6 June, the demonstration of thousands will more than make up the paucity of letters that the Secretary of State says that he has received. Why will he not give us a simple, democratic referendum so that the Scottish people can decide peacefully at the ballot box how they want to be governed?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman mentions Edinburgh. I have not sensed the same sensitivity by the Opposition to the question of who has authority to govern over the fact that Labour now controls Edinburgh district council with 29·5 per cent. of the vote. The hon. Gentleman calls for a multi-option referendum. Is is not the case that the real reason for that is to cover the confusion within the Labour party ranks? It has already abandoned the policy on which it fought the last general election and its spokesman on constitutional matters now favours federalism. Labour is now the multi-option party.

Mr. McMaster: Why will the Secretary of State not answer the question? If it was right yesterday for the Prime Minister to promise to respect the democratically expressed wishes of the people of Northern Ireland, surely it is right today for the Secretary of State to give the same commitment to the Scottish people. How can he deny that at the general election the people of Scotland overwhelmingly rejected his alien policies such as hospital opt-out, and voted overwhelmingly in favour of constitutional

change? If the Secretary of State is a democrat, will he accept the verdict of the general election in Scotland, or will he give us a multi-option referendum?

Mr. Lang: I have just answered the last question. The general election on 9 April was for this United Kingdom Parliament. The Labour party fought that election on devolution throughout the United Kingdom and it lost. The swing against Labour was heaviest in Scotland, where its policy was most clearly spelt out.

Mr. Gallie: My right hon. Friend is certainly looking after the interests of people in Scotland, 78 per cent. of whom voted to continue to maintain Scotland's place within the United Kingdom. That must be his priority. It is admitted on all sides that a halfway house would endanger that.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Labour's policies, like any policies based on self-interest rather than on principle, are falling apart.

Mr. Burns: Will my right hon. Friend remind Opposition Members that we are part of the United Kingdom and that this is the United Kingdom Parliament? As Scottish Members have every right to speak on English affairs, and do so, English Members have an equal right to speak on Scottish affairs. The overriding wish of the majority of people in this country and in Scotland is that Scotland should remain part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lang: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend who is absolutely right. Parliament makes provision for the needs of Scottish special circumstances, and that provision can be further changed as circumstances require. That is a matter to which attention is being given and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear that we will in due course report on the matter to the House.

Sir David Steel: The Government shop has been open for six weeks since the election. How long will the stocktaking take? What consultations does the right hon. Gentleman intend to have with other political parties before he makes up his mind?

Mr. Lang: We shall take as long as is necessary to reach a conclusion. Conservatives consider the issues first and pronounce later. Sometimes it is the other way round with the Opposition, and that is part of their problem.

Mr. Rowe: Before my right hon. Friend is in any danger of being intimidated by the hon. Friends of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), who cannot write, but who can rant, will he note that in my constituency there was a considerable feeling of confidence because had Labour achieved what it sought to achieve, none of the damage to the health service and a whole range of other services in England, as threatened by the Labour party, could have taken place? That was very reassuring.

Mr. Lang: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend and I understand his point entirely.

Mr. Canavan: In view of the Prime Minister's firm commitment to take stock of the position in Scotland and to report back to the House, why cannot the Secretary of State advise the Prime Minister that the best and most democratic way in which to take stock would be to consult the people of Scotland through a multi-option referendum? The Government should let the people of Scotland decide, because ultimately the real sovereignty of those people is far superior to any phoney sovereignty claimed by this House.

Mr. Lang: We consulted the people of the United Kingdom through the democratic process on 9 April. To have a multi-option referendum now on vague and unspecific philosophical concepts would prove nothing and achieve nothing other than disguise the confusion that reigns on the Opposition Benches as to what is their policy.

Local Government

4. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received in the last year on the future structure of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I have received a total of 465 responses to my first consultation paper on the future structure of local government in Scotland since its publication in June 1991.

Mr. Wallace: As there is no reference in the Gracious Speech to any legislation on this subject, will the Secretary of State now take the time that that absence offers to implement in Scotland the kind of commission that has been set up in England so that the views of the local communities can be ascertained on what the boundaries of the new authorities should be? Will he also acknowledge that the reform of local government is an opportunity, as recommended by the Montgomery committee, to consolidate, extend and develop the powers of the existing single-tier authorities in the islands?

Mr. Lang: We shall, of course, continue to consider what external advice should be sought on different aspects of the reform of local government. We have today commissioned a consultancy study by Touche Ross management consultants into the costs, transitional and running, of the kind of change to local government that we are contemplating. We also propose to set up, I hope with the agreement of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, a working party to study aspects of the internal management of local authorities. We are making progress with our plans on local government reform.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend is considering the proposals for local government restructuring will he bear in mind the wishes of the people of north Tayside, who want local government to be nearer to them? The proposed closure of the bridge over the River Ericht between Blairgowrie and Rattray will disrupt the tourist trade up to Braemar and in other areas in northern Perthshire and the Grampians. That decision shows only too well how out of touch the regional authority at Dundee is with the problems faced by the rural economy, particularly the tourist economy.

Mr. Lang: I am sure that my hon. Friend will pursue that specific point as he knows well how to do. I certainly acknowledge the importance of making local government more local, coherent and accountable. That is part of our purpose in considering reform.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Secretary of State confirm that a large number of those who responded to his consultation paper on the future of local government in Scotland called for an independent inquiry into its future? Is it not obvious, even to him, that without such an inquiry, radical

changes such as he is proposing to the structure and function of local government, will be seen by the Scottish people as undemocratic gerrymandering for the benefit of the Scottish Tory party? Why does he not announce such an inquiry today and so ensure that we have a proper structure of local government in Scotland in the future?

Mr. Lang: When we publish the second consultation paper, which we hope to do in the autumn, we shall consult widely, just as we did on our initial consultation paper. I have already said in answer to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) that we shall consider what external advice we may seek on different aspects of the reform as it proceeds.

Community Care

5. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for the future development of community care in the highlands.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): It is for Highland regional council, in conjunction with the health board, housing agencies, other service providers and users to determine the future pattern of community care services in the Highlands.

Sir Russell Johnston: May I first congratulate the Minister on his promotion? The fact that he is a decade older than I does not mean that he is so much wiser.

Will the Minister look at the calculations that Highland regional council has made on the proposal for a change in community care financing? It has worked out that that will result in a reduction of approximately 400 nursing and day care beds in the next three years. Will the Minister promise that, whatever change is made in community care financing, it will not lead to a reduction in that provision in the Highlands?

Sir Hector Monro: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's kind remarks. Sometimes vintage wine takes a long time to mature.

I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an absolute assurance on the number of places, but constructive talks are going on between my Department, Highland regional council and the health board. I am certain that, by the end of July when we announce the money for the transfers, and later in the autumn when we announce the money for local government, all will be well and the hon. Gentleman will be happy with the outcome.

Coal Privatisation

6. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effect the planned privatisation of the coal industry will have on the Scottish economy and on employment in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): Privatisation will give British Coal and its work force the opportunity to develop the productive efficiency of the mines to the full so that they can compete for the largest achievable share of the United Kingdom fuel market.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Minister support the idea that in the event of privatisation Scotland's coal assets should be sold off as a whole, rather than piecemeal? In other words, opencast and deep mine should be sold together. Will the Secretary of State agree to a meeting on the future of Monktonhall colliery, about which I am extremely worried?

Mr. Stewart: Having listened to the two good speeches that the hon. Gentleman has already made on that subject —his maiden speech and his speech on Monday—I can tell the House that the hon. Gentleman is a member of an endangered species: a Scottish Labour Member who knows what he is talking about. Obviously, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or I will meet the hon. Gentleman to discuss Monktonhall at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Hood: British Coal recently robbed the mineworkers' pension scheme of more than £500 million by taking a contribution holiday. Will the Minister assure Scottish miners that the billions of pounds in the mineworkers' pension scheme will not be used as a carrot to privatise the coal industry?

Mr. Stewart: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman was not present for the winding-up speech on Monday, when my hon. Friend the Minister of State answered that point.

Investment

8. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take to increase investment in the Scottish economy and to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Lang: The first step needed to increase investment in the Scottish economy and to reduce unemployment was the re-election of a Conservative Government. This we have now secured. Returning confidence, low inflation and a stable economic environment will lead to increased investment and more jobs.

Mr. McLeish: That was a disgraceful and characteristically complacent response from the Secretary of State. At a time when 250,000 Scots are unemployed, why can the Government provide only 3,000 temporary work places? When 10,000 young Scots have no income whatever and when only 500 vacancies exist in the careers offices and the youth guarantee scheme has fallen apart, why do they do nothing to assist? Scotland needs a Government committed to an industrial strategy in the 1990s. What does the Secretary of State intend to do about the crisis in Scotland, which the Government have failed to deal with in the past 13 years?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman fails to recognise that the last published figures of the number of people employed in Scotland showed that there were 2,294,000 —the highest number of people in employment on record. In addition, for the first time on record, unemployment in Scotland is lower than in the rest of the United Kingdom. Therefore, it is clear that the Scottish economy is stronger, broader based, more modernised and readier to take advantage of the economic upturn when it comes than it has been for a long time. That reflects on the Conservative Government.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on emphasising the fact that never before have so many people been employed in Scotland.

Mr. McLeish: That is not true.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Oh, yes, it is true. If the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) read *The Courier*, he would know that every week hundreds of job vacancies are advertised and every week only one is filled. How is it that so many people in Fife, Central and Perthshire are seeking jobs, yet nobody seems to want jobs?

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend makes a valid point. It was interesting that the job vacancy figures rose again last month, and have risen in successive months recently so that they now stand at a high level. A significant sign of returning confidence is that, since the general election, no fewer than five important inward investment decisions have been taken and announced, involving investment worth more than £50 million in Scotland and more than 900 jobs.

Mr. Worthington: The Secretary of State's claim that there are more people in employment now in Scotland than there were in 1979 is simply untrue, and I challenge him to produce the figures. Is it not true that, although anyone working more than 16 hours a week is now classified as being in full-time employment, there are more than 200,000 fewer people employed in Scotland than in 1979?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's figures must be incorrect as I have given the latest figure showing that 2,294,000 people are employed in Scotland at present. I wish that Labour Members would occasionally welcome good news and talk Scotland up for a change, instead of constantly talking it down.

Council House Sales

9. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council houses have been sold in Scotland to their tenants since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total number of houses sold by public authorities since 1979 is nearly 248,000, of which nearly 240,000 have been sold to sitting tenants. Nearly 178,000 of those sales to sitting tenants were made by local authorities.

Mr. Kynoch: Although I welcome the news about the number of sales of council houses to private individuals, what measures are being taken to ensure that there is an adequate stock of rented accommodation, particularly in fast-developing districts such as the environs of Aberdeen where housing prices are high?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend on his outstanding victory in the general election. His constituency is typical of many constituencies in the north-east, and has problems associated with success. We are ensuring that Scottish Homes is sufficiently funded. It is committing £1·75 million to provide housing association budgets in Kincardine and Deeside for 60 housing units. An increasing population is one of the factors that we take into account when making allocations to housing authorities. We shall continue to do so and shall give further encouragement to the private rented sector.

Mrs. Fyfe: While he is about it, would the Minister care to tell the House how many council houses in Scotland are unfit to live in? At the present permission-to-borrow rate given to local authorities, in which year next century does the Minister expect council tenants in Scotland to have decent houses in which to live? Is that too much to ask? Perhaps the Minister should come to Glasgow to look at the deplorable housing conditions of many people, instead of swanning around nice new developments and ignoring the problems of many of those people.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Lady talks of swanning around nice new developments, several of which in her constituency I much enjoyed seeing and am glad to support. We strongly support the policy of bringing empty houses back into use in Scotland. Total funding for the public sector this year will be about £897 million and for Scottish Homes it will be £364 million—a total of about £1·25 billion. Those figures represent substantial resources if properly applied. I recommend that the hon. Lady's authority co-operate with other organisations to find the best policy for empty houses in the constituency.

Mr. Dewar: I congratulate the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) on speaking up and drawing attention to the lack of rented accommodation. That is a sign of independence among Scottish Tory Back Benchers, which I welcome.

Does the Minister accept that it is tragic at a time when the housing stock in the public sector in many areas is crumbling, when damp is a scourge destroying the quality of life for thousands and when rents have been artificially forced up, that the main exhibit in the Scottish Office's legislative programme is an adjustment to the rents-to-mortgages scheme which has so far attracted only 0·1 per cent. of eligible tenants? Is that not an abdication of responsibility, given the problems that we face and the desperate need for increased resources?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have reason to believe that the cause of the low take-up in the rents-to-mortgages scheme by local authorities so far is that some appear to have been waiting to see who would win the general election. The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues are still in opposition and we are still in government. The amount spent on publicity was a drop in the ocean compared with the receipts of well in excess of £1 billion, which have been spent on public sector houses in Scotland for the right to buy generally. The rents-to-mortgages publicity had the effect of greatly increasing right-to-buy sales, and I have no doubt that when we introduce our Bill to extend tenants' rights far further than the Labour party ever did, this procedure will be speeded up and there will be many more sales throughout Scotland.

Local Government

10. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people signed responses to the consultation paper the "Structure of Local Government in Scotland" calling for a local council for Cambuslang and Rutherglen.

Mr. Allan Stewart: We have received 2,364 individual letters and postcards as well as a 44-signature petition requesting a local council for Rutherglen and Cumbuslang.

Mr. McAvoy: The Minister will be aware that each of those submissions carried more than one signature and that in addition there was full-scale support for a local council at public meetings at Halfway, Cambuslang and Rutherglen. Moreover, a parliamentary petition to that effect has been signed by 12,000 people. Does the Minister accept that the people of Halfway, Cambuslang and Rutherglen have made it clear that they want a local council and that if the Government mean what they say about listening to local communities, they will have to deliver what a former Tory Government took away in 1973—a local council for Halfway, Cambuslang and Rutherglen?

Mr. Stewart: The whole House will recognise that those are pretty impressive statistics. My right hon. Friend has emphasised that the reorganisation of local government in Scotland is to be people driven. We are consulting on these matters; there may be a case for a local council in Rutherglen and Cambuslang more closely in line with the hon. Gentleman's constituency. But I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an absolute assurance—not today anyway.

Brain Tumours

11. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many brain tumours have been detected in children between the ages of five and seven years in the Ayrshire and Arran health board area in the past two years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In 1989 and 1990, the latest two years for which cancer registration data are available, no children in the age range five to seven in the Ayrshire and Arran health board area were registered with a malignant brain tumour.

Mr. Donohoe: Is the Minister aware that the figure for 1991-92 stands at eight? If that information is correct and if the figure is based on clusters, as I am informed it is, will he initiate an inquiry?

Mr. Stewart: I have received no such figure from my Department. I will, of course, look into the matter and write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware of the concern in south Ayrshire that the danger of an increased number of brain tumours and other cancers will increase if Scottish Power is allowed to go ahead with the proposed transmission line from Killoch to Ballantrae? May we have an assurance that the Secretary of State will take account of that when he eventually considers the application?

Mr. Stewart: No established link has been found between electromagnetic fields and adverse health effects. There has been extensive research on the issue in many countries since about 1970 and that research continues. The United Kingdom electricity industry is contributing to it. I do not regard this as a matter of party politics, and if the hon. Gentleman wants a full briefing from my Department, he may have one.

Electors

12. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the average number of electors for Scottish constituencies; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average electorate for Scotland, based on the current electoral register, is 54,570.

Mr. Dunn: Do not the figures suggest an imbalance in terms of equity in the number of electors that it takes to constitute a constituency in Scotland compared with the number in England? Does not my hon. Friend therefore agree that the options before his Department are to reduce the number of seats in Scotland or to increase the number of seats in England; which would he prefer?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend's case is that if the population in England is swelling, there may be a case for increasing the number of parliamentary seats south of the border; but if he considers the history of the issue, he will see that since 1918 the number of Scottish constituencies has increased by one, whereas since 1948 the number of English seats has increased by 18 and the number of Welsh seats by two. The present settlement takes account of Scotland's status as a small nation and of large, sparsely populated and inaccessible areas. The issue has been considered three times since 1945 and on every occasion Parliament decided in favour of 71 seats for Scotland.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Does the Minister accept that there would be more people on the register in Scotland if the register were properly compiled? Is he aware that, in my constituency of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth, a large number of electors were deprived of their vote because the register had been incompetently prepared and that my agent, Mrs. Anne McGuire, and I spent election day fielding complaints from constituents who had lost their vote? What steps will the Minister take to ensure that registers are properly compiled so that electors get the vote to which they are entitled?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We undertake extensive advertising to make certain that all who are eligible are on the roll to exercise their democratic right, but I shall look into the hon. Gentleman's specific point about his constituency.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: As I represent the Scottish constituency that has the largest number of votes—I point out to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) that I represent 81,500 voters and that there is a wide disparity —may I congratulate the Minister on giving a robust defence of the reason why Scotland should be represented in the House in that way and also make it absolutely clear that there can be no question of reducing the representation by Scottish Members of Parliament in the House before the creation of a Scottish Parliament?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The situation might change entirely were there to be a tax-raising Scottish Parliament. There was a Parliament in one part of Britain —at Stormont—and if similar procedures were applied to this House, the number of Scottish Members of Parliament would be reduced to 40.

Mr. Wilson: I congratulate the Minister on having shed some light into the tunnel of the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn). As I am sure the Minister knows, the Home Affairs Committee discovered as recently as 1986 that

"These disparities should be regarded as an intended consequence of the 1949 Act"

and, in the judgment of that Committee—accepted by successive Governments—

"it would not be feasible on political grounds to change the Rules"——

Madam Speaker: Order. We do not read or quote during parliamentary questions. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Minister send the conclusion of that report and perhaps equip the hon. Member for Dartford with a copy of it, and possibly also with a map —especially of the north of Scotland—to explain to him some of those disparities?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can confirm that, as the hon. Gentleman said, the Select Committee on Home Affairs examined that issue in 1986 and did not recommend any change. I should point out to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) that the reason for the 71 seats being increased to 72 was that the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Scotland recommended one extra seat for Scotland in its third periodic report in 1983 arising out of representations, in the main from Glasgow.

Enterprise Zone, Ravenscraig

13. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has now received permission from the European Commission to establish an enterprise zone in the Ravenscraig area.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The European Commission agreed our proposals for an enterprise zone in Lanarkshire on 10 March 1992. Work is now in hand to designate the zone, which is expected to create some 8,700 net additional jobs over its 10-year life.

Sir Teddy Taylor: What evidence did the Government have to supply to the Commission to persuade it to achieve this tacky outcome?

Mr. Stewart: As was explained to the House in several debates, the Government prepared the case for an enterprise zone over a long period. A great deal of detailed work was undertaken, principally by officials in the Scottish Office and the Treasury. That work enabled the Commission to reach its decision quickly. I hope that the House will congratulate the Commission on reaching a favourable decision in less than two months. The decision was reached much sooner than had been expected and the speed with which the Commission moved on this occasion is a tribute to it.

Dr. Godman: I hope that the Minister's projection of about 8,500 jobs is borne out. My experience with the Inverclyde enterprise zone suggests that the actual number of jobs produced will be much lower, and that will be a sad business for the people of north Lanarkshire. When are the people of Inverclyde to be given decent treatment by way of the Inverclyde enterprise zone?

Madam Speaker: Order. What is the question?

Dr. Godman: Far too many people in Inverclyde are still unemployed and that lot on the Government Front Bench are doing nothing to improve the lot of the people of Inverclyde.

Mr. Stewart: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman chose not to mention the recent announcement by National Semiconductor Ltd., which was a major boost for his constituency.

Dr. Godman: Outside the enterprise zone.

Mr. Stewart: Indeed, but was it not a major boost for the hon. Gentleman's constituency?

Dr. Godman: Outside the enterprise zone.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman and Inverclyde district council have discussed the enterprise zone with me. The hon. Gentleman is aware of the commitment of Scottish Enterprise and Renfrewshire Enterprise. He knows what is being undertaken to improve the infrastructure on the sites. I hope very much that the Inverclyde enterprise zone will be the success that the hon. Gentleman and his constituents want.

Hospitals

14. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last consulted Lanarkshire health board on the future status of Monklands district hospital and Bellshill maternity hospital.

Mr. Lang: An expression of interest in trust status has been made by clinicians and management in Monklands district hospital and Bellshill maternity hospital. I will be consulting the health board as and when a formal trust application is received.

Mr. Clarke: Before the Secretary of State takes a final decision on these matters will he carefully consider the third report of the Select Committee on Health, which sets out what a shambles previous opt-out arrangements have proved to be? Will he specifically give assurances about the quality of care that is being provided in mental health and geriatric services in the unit and the future status of Coathill hospital?

Whatever else the Secretary of State might have said today, will he have the sensitivity genuinely to consult those who provide services as well as the communities that receive them, especially as the Government's thinking on these matters was overwhelmingly rejected by the people of Lanarkshire on 9 April?

Mr. Lang: I am sure that the health board will take account of all relevant factors in considering the matter. There will be a consultation period of three months, during which such points can be made to it. The hon. Gentleman talks about an alleged shambles. If he examines the experience of trust hospitals in the south he will find evidence of more patients treated, more equipment bought, more consultants recruited and an all-round improvement in the quality of medical service.

Dr. Reid: In the light of what the Secretary of State has said about opt-outs, will he explain why the Tory placemen and placewomen who constitute the Lanarkshire health board assured my colleagues from Lanarkshire and myself on 16 September 1991 that there was not a whiff of interest in opting out, when five months later there is, apparently, a great deal of interest in it? Will he explain what has happened other than a general election? Was information suppressed because the placemen and placewomen and those who placed them—the Tories on

the Government Front Bench—knew that if they told the people of Lanarkshire that their best hospitals were to be opted out, their share of the vote would be more derisory than it turned out to be in the general election?

Mr. Lang: The reason for the revived interest in trust hospital status derives from the fact that the threat of the nine-day wonder proposed by the Labour party has now been removed. People are now more aware of the reality of trust status and the advantages that it brings. They realise that the alarms and the irresponsible scares conjured up by the Labour party have no basis.

The hon. Gentleman referred to popular support. I can only point out to him that the Conservative party held the Ayr constituency and won the Aberdeen, South constituency and the Kincardine and Deeside constituency, where the two trust status hospitals exist.

Mr. Galbraith: Does the Secretary of State agree that opted-out hospitals have no statutory obligation to undertake national health service work and that there is no limit on the extent of their private practices? What will the right hon. Gentleman do to restrict the amount of private practice undertaken in those hospitals? How will he do that and so prevent the extensive development of a two-tier system?

Mr. Lang: The relationship between a trust hospital and its health board is negotiated between them and included in their contract. The hon. Gentleman knows that the vast majority of the medical care carried out by trust hospitals will be for the NHS.

15. **Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Lothian health board about hospital provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Discussions about the provision of hospital services in Lothian normally take place with the NHS management executive which reports to Ministers.

Dr. Strang: Does the Minister accept that there is now an overwhelming consensus in Lothian behind the plan to construct a new hospital at Little France, in the south-east area of Edinburgh, to replace the Edinburgh royal infirmary? Does he further accept that if that new hospital is to be a centre of international excellence in medical teaching, research and practice—not just an accident and emergency service—and a major trauma centre, and if it is to give value for money in Lothian, it must be a large hospital? When will the Government give approval in principle to the project?

Mr. Stewart: Lothian health board is reviewing its acute services strategy, which includes the provision of a new teaching hospital in Edinburgh. Once the strategic decisions are taken on the scale and distribution of acute services, other important related issues can be decided.

On the question of the time scale, I was advised earlier today that decisions will be reached in the summer. I rather churlishly pointed out that perhaps the summer had arrived and I was advised that the time scale for decision making will be late summer. My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State will keep the hon. Gentleman fully in touch with developments.

Mr. Darling: How will any decision by the present royal infirmary to opt out of the health service affect the new royal infirmary? The Minister must be aware that administrators in the royal infirmary are trying to drum up interest in opting out. Would that affect the new royal infirmary? Many people would be very angry if public money were used to build one of the most prestigious hospitals in the world, only to discover that it was being handed over to a private enterprise.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is fighting the battles of the past.

Mr. Galloway: We won those battles.

Mr. Stewart: Does the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) agree with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway)? Labour Members are fighting the battles of the past.

In considering any applications, my right hon. Friend will take all relevant factors into account.

Fishing

16. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future of the fishing industry in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The review of the common fisheries policy makes 1992 a key year for the fishing industry and I will be fighting hard to safeguard the interests of Scottish fishermen.

Mr. Campbell: Does the Minister understand the extent of dismay and frustration throughout the Scottish fishing industry at the apparently seemingly endless sequence of restrictions on fishermen and their ability to make a reasonable living? In particular, does he understand the depth of hostility to the proposition that, in return for the decommissioning scheme presently on offer, the whole fleet will have to accept the enforced restrictions for the three years between 1993 and 1996?

Sir Hector Monro: The Secretary of State and I are keen that the Scottish fishing industry should flourish, but it must realise that conservation is the key to the future. We are short of white fish and we cannot proceed without effective conservation measures, some of which may seem extremely restrictive but they are there in the interests of the fishermen and the housewife. We wish that we did not have to impose them, but we must.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Minister understand that there is unanimous agreement in the fishing industry on the importance of conservation? Does he further understand that there is unanimous agreement that there should be a proper decommissioning scheme? Now that the general election is behind the Minister, will he take a more open view and have more open discussions on how we can obtain a fishing industry which is not only viable but serves the needs of consumers?

Sir Hector Monro: I am glad that we were able to announce a decommissioning scheme earlier in the year. That is now out for consultation and we shall take into account everything that the fishing industry tells us before it is introduced next year.

Madam Speaker: Mr. Rathbone.

Mr. Rathbone *rose*—

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I take points of order after questions.

Mr. Galloway: The hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) has just walked in. How can you dare to call the hon. Gentleman when Scottish Members have been sitting here since 2.30?

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Galloway: It is disgraceful.

Madam Speaker: Order. Mr. Rathbone.

Mr. Rathbone: When my hon. Friend is considering the Scottish fishing industry, will he discuss with his English counterpart the English fishery industry in which among others, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) has taken such interest recently? How the southern English fisheries operate is a matter of concern to Scottish Members.

Mr. Galloway: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. As is my practice, I shall take points of order after questions.

Sir Hector Monro: I assure my hon. Friend that there is the closest contact between fisheries Ministers and every aspect of fishing is taken into account, as they will be in the coming negotiations in Europe.

NHS Trusts

18. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends meeting chairmen of health boards in Scotland to discuss opting out.

Mr. Lang: I have no present plans to meet the chairmen of health boards in Scotland, but my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State will next meet them on 10 July.

Mr. Ross: Is there not a slight contradiction in the proposals of the various unit managers for opting out their particular hospitals when they say that, by opting out, their hospitals will increase efficiency and provide a fair service and more operations? Is it not about time that the Secretary of State asked all the health board chairmen, whom he or his predecessor appointed, why the people of Scotland cannot expect greater efficiency and more equipment and operations under the present system, because there will be no change after opting out?

Mr. Lang: It is not the chairmen of the health boards who are submitting the applications to opt out. The advantages of trust status for hospitals are more local management, more flexibility and the ability to deliver more and better patient services, and the evidence is accumulating throughout the United Kingdom that that is what happens.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend meets the health board chairmen, will he draw their attention to the interest in Forfar in self-governing hospital status and will he give that a fair wind?

Mr. Lang: I understand the interest in self-governing status in Forfar. My hon.Friend knows well that the matter has been considered before and not proceeded with, but any such expression of interest will be reconsidered as appropriate.

Constituencies

19. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will bring forward proposals to bring the size of Scottish parliamentary constituencies in line with those in England.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. The Government have, however, announced legislative proposals that will expedite the work of the parliamentary boundary commissions and ensure that their next reports are completed earlier than would otherwise be the case. That will mean that elections need not be fought on out-of-date electorates.

Mr. Bruce: Will my hon. Friend think again because, clearly, a married couple in Glasgow who decided to move to my constituency of South Dorset would find that one of them had effectively lost his or her vote because two voters in my constituency are equivalent to one in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend may be exaggerating slightly. The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 made it clear that the number of Scottish seats should be not fewer than 71. The purpose of the Bill that the Home Office will bring forward in due course will be to expedite the work of the United Kingdom boundaries commissions. We do not expect any unnecessary delay.

Primary Schools Testing

20. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take on testing in primary 4 and 7.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend intends to have in place a system of testing that implements our policies and commands wide public acceptance.

Mr. McFall: I welcome the Minister to his post—not least in the expectation that, unlike his predecessor, he will listen to those concerned with teachers and parents and others who are worried about Scottish education. The Minister will be aware of the hostility and disruption that the unilaterally imposed tests caused. Given that the Government have reached agreement with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities that from next year it will police those tests in the proper way, will the hon. Gentleman, as an act of generosity, announce today that he is withdrawing those tests—so that the Government may demonstrate their respect for the concerns felt by parents and teachers in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Certainly not. As to the tests, we believe that it is absolutely necessary to be committed to the assessment of pupils' progress against national standards. The hon. Gentleman does my predecessor a grave injustice. He is a person of courage and conviction, and in April 1981 he raised with COSLA the proposals that were recently advanced. There will be a review, and a consultative paper will be published in due course. The tests must most certainly go ahead.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Galloway.

Mr. Galloway: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Less than 10 minutes ago, we witnessed a parliamentary outrage. An English Tory Member of Parliament, the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), who represents a constituency on the south coast of England, arrived for Scottish Question Time at twenty-five minutes past three. After you, Madam Speaker, called that hon. Gentleman, he asked a question about fishing. My hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), who is a Scottish Member of Parliament, had been in his place since half-past two waiting to ask a question on that subject, which is vital to his constituency.

It is outrageous that an English hon. Member can stroll in here five minutes before the end of Scottish questions and be called in preference to a Scottish Member of Parliament. We are given only one hour per month to question the minority regime that governs our country. It is an abuse for the Government's ranks to be buttressed by Tory Members rolling in after a good lunch and disrupting Scottish questions in that way.

Mr. McAllion: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. Does it relate to the same matter?

Mr. McAllion: It does. When you accepted the high office that you now hold, Madam Speaker, you said, quite correctly, that you would give high priority to defending the interests of Back Benchers. I calculate that there are only 50 genuine Back Benchers representing Scottish constituencies. Given that we can question the Government on only one day per month, whereas English Members of Parliament can raise questions every day that the House sits, why cannot you rule, Madam Speaker, that priority be given in Scottish Question Time to Scottish Members of Parliament who represent Scottish constituencies?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me attempt to answer the points of order that have already been raised. As to Scottish questions, I am obliged to call right hon. and hon. Members present at a particular Question Time, wherever they may be seated. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Order. Let me finish. I was not aware today that the hon. Member in question had been present in the Chamber for only a few minutes. If that was the case, it was remiss of me to call him. I assure the House that I deprecate right hon. or hon. Members who slip in to the Chamber for just a few minutes in order to be called, and then slip out again. I assure the House that in future, I shall keep a close eye on such activities.

Mr. Rathbone *rose*——

Mr. Canavan *rose*——

Sir Donald Thompson *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the point of order of the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) on a different subject? If not, I call the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan).

Mr. Canavan: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have no personal complaint against you, but I wish to raise what I believe to be an important matter of principle.

Tory Members represent fewer than one in six Scottish constituencies. Would it not be in the interests of fairness all round if that political composition were taken into account when supplementary questioners are selected during Scottish Question Time?

Madam Speaker: I take a great deal into consideration before I come to the Chair.

Dr. Godman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Dr. Godman: Yes, Madam Speaker. On a number of occasions during the last Parliament, I urged Mr. Speaker Weatherhill to impress on Scottish Office Ministers the need to offer concise, brief answers to questions, rather than making speeches. The same holds true in this Parliament.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman and the entire House will know that I have already made a statement about that. I refer the hon. Gentleman to *Hansard*. Now I hope that we shall have no more points of order.

Mr. McAllion: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has already raised a point of order with me.

Points of Order

3.35 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you give the House any information about whether the Government intend to make a statement about the Earth summit at Rio de Janeiro, which starts on 2 June?

I have just had the amazing experience of visiting the other place, where a five-hour debate on the Earth summit is beginning. In the House of Commons, however, we have heard no indication of the Government's policy on an issue of global importance. Furthermore, the Minister for Overseas Development—who was formerly in this place, and is now in the other place—was not present in the other place to deal with the issue.

Madam Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the Chair. I have grasped the main point that the hon. Lady has raised, and she may wish to raise it again during Business Questions on Thursday.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I return to the original point of order? Is it not totally unfair—

Madam Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat. I have given a ruling and I will not go back on it. I will take only points of order on other issues.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. We are about to begin a debate on a Bill that implements a treaty that has to be merged with another treaty, yet we have no text of the merged treaty. We do not know who will perform the merger, or who will produce the interpretation of which treaty shall prevail in that merger.

Yesterday, Madam Speaker, you ruled that the Bill before us was perfectly in order—which, of course, it is, because it is a three-clause Bill. However, it implements a treaty that will be incomprehensible unless the House has a copy of the merged document consisting of the treaty of Rome and the treaty of union. The Foreign Office has failed to provide us with essential information: we are legislating in the dark.

I have here a merged text of the two treaties, which has been drawn up by Professor Stephen Bush. Would it be in order if I laid it on the Table, and we adjourned so that hon. Members could read it? It is only 188 pages long, and it would be useful if we knew what we were legislating about.

Madam Speaker: I refer the hon. Gentleman and the House to the statement that I made yesterday. He should consider raising those matters in debate rather than on a point of order.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. For the benefit of those who have raised the matter, may I remind the House that the vast majority of Scots who live in Britain——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have made a ruling that I will take no more points of order on that issue, and we are not going back. I have made my position abundantly clear.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) has said, we are about to debate a Bill that enshrines the principle of subsidiarity in the United Kingdom's constitution. Unfortunately, the majority of hon. Members are not prepared to apply that principle in Scotland. In such circumstances, how can those of us who represent the democratic majority in Scotland secure Scotland's national rights by ensuring that that principle is applied in Scotland as it will be applied throughout Europe?

Madam Speaker: It is for individual Members to decide how they deal with the Bill and how they vote at the end of the day.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Further to the point of order with regard to the treaty of union, apart from the effect of the treaty being difficult to comprehend, the clauses of the treaty are, in many cases, not clear and have to be open to interpretation. Normally, when we deal with a complex Bill with a lot of clauses whose interpretation is uncertain, there is the opportunity in Committee to table and move amendments in order to test the meaning of each clause. When this Bill is considered in Committee, will there be an equivalent opportunity for Members to table and move amendments to test the meaning of each clause?

Madam Speaker: I think that we must wait for the Committee stage. It would be wrong for me to predetermine what will happen then. However, I hope that the most thorough examination will be made of the various clauses and amendments, once the Bill is in Committee. Perhaps we can now proceed.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

[Relevant documents:

Treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act (Cm 455)

Treaty on European Union (Cm 1934)

Fifteenth Report from the Select Committee on European Legislation (House of Commons Paper No. 24-xv of Session 1991-92)

Second Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 223 of Session 1991-92) on Europe after Maastricht and Observations by the Government on the Report (Cm 1965)

Third Report from the Health Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 180 of Session 1991-92) on the European Community and Health Policy

Minutes of Evidence taken before the Home Affairs Committee on 5th, 12th and 26th February 1992 (House of Commons Paper No. 215 of Session 1991-92 on Migration Control at the External Borders of the European Community

Minutes of Evidence taken before the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on 19th February 1992 (House of Commons Paper No. 285 of Session 1991-92) on Economic and Monetary Union

Fourth Special Report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 334 of Session 1991-92) on European Community Finances

The White Paper on Developments in the European Community, July-December 1991 (Cm 1857)

The White Paper on Developments in the European Community, January-June 1991 (Cm 1657).]

Madam Speaker: Before I call the Prime Minister, I should inform the House that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. I have also determined that today I shall not invoke the Standing Order on the 10-minute rule for speeches, but in response to my generosity in that respect, I hope that individual right hon. and hon. Members will exercise some self-restraint. There are a large number of Members who want to speak. We want all their voices to be heard in the debate.

3.41 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

When my right hon. Friends——

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not want to disrupt our proceedings at this stage.

Mr. McAllion *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. McAllion: The Government are denying Scotland its democratic right to——

Hon. Members: Name him.

Madam Speaker: Order. I do not wish to name anyone. I understand the passionate feelings that run high here, but I am confident that the hon. Gentleman, who I am sure represents his Scottish constituency very proudly, is not seeking to disrupt our proceedings today, which——

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): They are misgoverning our country.

Madam Speaker: Order. This is a very serious matter. Let us deal with it in a serious way.

Mr. McAllion *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to reconsider what he is asking me to do.

Mr. McAllion: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I spy strangers, and the strangers are those who are denying Scotland its rights in this very important debate.

Madam Speaker: In that case, I must put the motion.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, MADAM SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of strangers from House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The House divided: Ayes 13, Noes 284.

Division No. 17] **[3.43 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Connarty, Michael
Dafis, Cynog
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Galloway, George
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
McKelvey, William
Salmond, Alex
Wigley, Dafydd
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mike Watson and
Mr. John McAllion.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Barnes, Harry
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Andrew F.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Corbett, Robin
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen

Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Enright, Derek
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Golding, Mrs Llin
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hoon, Geoff
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Livingstone, Ken
Lord, Michael
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
MacDonald, Calum
MacKay, Andrew
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Mandelson, Peter
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morley, Elliot
Moss, Malcolm
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stott, Roger
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Tipping, Paddy
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wareing, Robert N
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wicks, Malcolm
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Wright, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Boswell and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is a further point of order necessary at this stage?

Mr. Walker *indicated assent.*

Madam Speaker: Mr. Walker.

Mr. Walker: I am sure that you would always wish to defend the rights of Members, Madam Speaker, but you will be aware that the recent disruption was not spontaneous: it was in the Scottish press yesterday, and we knew that it would happen. It is an abuse of the House.

Madam Speaker: In response to that point of order, I made the point earlier to the House—I do not come in to this Chamber entirely unprepared.

3.55 pm

The Prime Minister: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a second time.

When my right hon. Friends and I went to Maastricht we went with a clear mandate from this House. The agreement that we brought back honoured that mandate in every respect. It was approved by a large majority in the House in December, and by the electorate last month. I believe that the Maastricht agreement protects and promotes our national interest. The Bill before us carries that agreement into law.

Clause 1 carries into United Kingdom law amendments to the treaty of Rome and other Community treaties. It reflects the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1978, which provides that there can be no increase in the powers of the European Parliament without the express approval of this House.

Clause 2 implements the agreement we secured at Maastricht to ensure that it is entirely a matter for this Parliament to decide whether, and if so when, to join a European single currency. We are under no obligation to do so.

[The Prime Minister]

Clause 2 provides that a separate Act of Parliament would be required before the United Kingdom could notify its partners in the Community of its intention to move to the third stage of economic and monetary union. That provision for primary legislation is not a legal requirement which flows from the treaty. It does, however, reflect the Government's belief that it will be for Parliament to determine the issue, and to do so in the way in which Parliament most clearly demonstrates its sovereignty.

I do not believe that it is right to predetermine a decision that should only properly be taken by Parliament, in the light of the circumstances then prevailing across Europe. This decision is too important to be an act of faith —it must also be an act of judgment, and that judgment cannot sensibly yet be made.

Before I turn to the substance of what is in the Bill, let me stress for the convenience of the House what is not there. The Bill contains no provision for those aspects of the Maastricht treaty which cover foreign and security policy, and justice and home affairs issues. If it did, we would have failed at Maastricht to meet the commitments that we gave this House last November. The virtue of those provisions in the Maastricht treaty is that they are outside the treaty of Rome, outside the competence of the Commission, and wholly for agreement between Governments, on a case by case basis. They need to be put to the House, but quite specifically have no direct effect in United Kingdom law.

The content of the Maastricht treaty is well known to the House. The draft of the treaty was debated before Maastricht, and the treaty itself was debated afterwards —a total so far of some 30 hours of debate.

What we kept out of the treaty at Maastricht is as important, in the event, as what went into it. There is no social chapter—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."]—and I shall come to that later.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: Not at this stage.

There is no social chapter, there is no diminution in the role of NATO, there is no power for the European Parliament to approve decisions rejected by the Council of Ministers, no weakening of our power of national decision-taking in foreign policy, no word "federal" and no commitment to a federal—by which I mean a centralising—Europe.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

The Prime Minister: Not at this moment—later, perhaps.

Many in this House and throughout the country have expressed anxiety that decision making in the Community is becoming too centralised. In fact, many of the issues which are most problematic for us—I shall talk about some of them later—arise from the application of the original treaty of Rome, not the Maastricht treaty. The Maastricht treaty marks the point at which, for the first time, we have begun to reverse that centralising trend. We have moved decision taking back towards the member states in areas where Community law need not and should not apply.

Let me inform those who are unaware of that fact that we have done so in a number of ways. We have secured a legally binding text on subsidiarity. That text provides that any action by the Community shall not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the treaty. More specifically, it provides that, in areas that do not fall within the exclusive competence of the Community—such as environment, health, education, social policy—the Community shall take action only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be achieved by the member states.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Will the Prime Minister give way now?

The Prime Minister: A little later, perhaps.

We need to ensure that the Commission gives full effect to that requirement. I believe that it is obliged to give full effect to that requirement. Were it not to meet that requirement, we now have the power to take the issue to the European Court of Justice for adjudication. That is a right that we argued for at Maastricht and obtained.

In the published work programme for 1992, the President of the Commission said:

> "If a success is to be made of Maastricht and the Single Market, the Commission will have to comply fully with the principle of subsidiarity. Indeed its future existence depends on this. The Commission . . . will have to ensure that no attempt is made to regulate matters that are best dealt with at national level, and to avoid a surfeit of legislation."

Those are not my words, but those of the President of the Commission, but upon that matter I agree with him. Subsidiarity is vital. If that failed, we would not be the only member state that would insist on reviewing the policy to ensure its effective implementation.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): As the Prime Minister is so keen to stress the importance of subsidiarity as between Europe and the United Kingdom, does he agree that the same principle should be applied by him and his Government within the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: We are a single United Kingdom, and we are going to remain a single United Kingdom, for it is in the interests of every part of it that we should do so.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Will the Prime Minister accept that that is his definition of subsidiarity and not the definition of the Spanish or German Governments? Does he not understand that in Spain, for example, the countries of Catalonia and the Basque will be able to benefit from the principle of subsidiarity? Why not Wales and Scotland?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is well aware of the traditions of this Parliament and the methods by which this whole United Kingdom is governed. I believe that they represent the right way for every single part of the United Kingdom, and the Government have no plans to change them.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has had plenty of opportunity in recent weeks to make his case, and, by and large, the electorate rejected it.

Nor does subsidiarity mean that relatively minor issues are returned to the member states in exchange for a growth of power at the centre. I know that that is what many people fear, not least some hon. Members. They fear that the institutions of the Community will increase their powers step by step so that, in the end, we create what we understand by a federal Europe: a strong, central Government in Brussels with some powers devolved to the individual nation state.

I understand those fears, but that is not the route foreshadowed by the Maastricht treaty; nor is it a route down which this country will go. The question is not whether the risk of centralism exists: the question is whether we have the confidence to exert our influence to build the Community we want to see. We have, we can, and we are building such a Community. We can win those arguments. We are doing so. I must say to those hon. Members who dissent that I frankly do not understand why so many people must always assume that we will lose policy arguments in Europe when we so often win them, as we did at Maastricht.

Let me explain why I am confident of that. For the first time in a single treaty, agreements between Governments are given equal standing with action under Community law. In foreign and security policy, and in justice and interior matters, the member states will work together when it is in their common interest to do so. What exactly does that mean? It means that, where such co-operation is helpful to this country, we shall co-operate with our partners in Europe. It also means that we cannot be forced into policies we do not approve of. We keep our ability to act on our own where we need to do so. We shall co-operate within a framework of international law but outside the framework of Community law.

For example, any dispute would go to the International Court of Justice, not the European Court of Justice. I believe that that marks a vital and important change in direction for the Community. It strengthens the unity of the member states but reinforces the case for tackling our common problems by the most effective means available to us. That may on occasion be the treaty of Rome. It may equally well be intergovernmental co-operation. The Maastricht treaty provides for both, and it allows for neither—where the member states can act better on their own. That opens fresh opportunities for the future development of the Community.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): If we proceed in foreign security matters on the basis that we shall co-operate if it is convenient for us, that applies equally to all other countries in the Community. How can we achieve a coherent policy in that way?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman should ask that question in the reverse way: would he prefer our foreign policy to be determined by the majority vote of other countries? That is not a proposition to which I am prepared to agree on behalf of this country. I am prepared to agree to the pooling of foreign policy where it is in the interests of this country and Europe, and where we agree that it will be to the communal benefit to do so. But thus far and no further.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Will the Prime Minister touch on one aspect of the treaty with which he has not dealt: the transfer of power from the legislature to the executive? The Prime Minister, using the Crown prerogative of treaty making through a Cabinet Committee, can agree to laws in Brussels at the Council of Ministers, which take precedence over laws passed by the House. For the first time since 1649, the prerogative controls the House, instead of the House controlling the prerogative.

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, he is referring not to the Maastricht treaty which we are debating, but to a principle that goes right back to the 1972 Act. In practice, greater control over the European executive was ceded at Maastricht as a result of the treaty—predominantly, in this case, to the European Parliament—but no authorities were taken from the Council of Ministers, and Ministers remain responsible to this House.

The strength of what we have achieved is not just that the choices that I mentioned a moment ago are in the treaty but, equally important, that they reflect the growing wish of the member states. The old tendency among some of our partners to think that action by the Community was always the answer is diminishing. Many countries joined the Community to strengthen their own national democracy. Now that their own democracy is strong and more firmly rooted, it is becoming much more possible in the Community to have rational discussion about what should be done at Community level and what should be done at national level. That is a healthy development for the future of the whole European Community.

Within the framework of the Community treaties, we have secured amendments to the treaty of Rome to reflect important United Kingdom objectives. We have strengthened the rule of law in the Community by stricter rules on the implementation of agreed provisions. In future, if directives are agreed across the Community, they must be implemented across the Community, or penalties will inevitably follow. That provision directly responds to the concern felt by many that, while our domestic law compels the United Kingdom to implement Community law speedily, others sometimes do not act with the same dispatch.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I should like to make more progress.

We have also secured better financial accountability. At Britain's insistence, the Commission will now have to provide an assurance that sufficient resources are available for any proposed Community action. It can no longer commit itself to expenditure for which resources are not available, and we keep a complete lock on the overall resources available to the Community. There can be no increase in those resources unless we agree with our European partners that there should be. There can be no change in our abatement without our agreement, and I have no intention of agreeing to any adverse change in our abatement in the discussions that lie ahead.

The Court of Auditors, which now becomes a Community institution, will present the Council and the European Parliament with a statement of assurance on the reliability of the accounts and the legality of the underlying transactions. The treaty contains new provisions to counter fraud.

In the agreements reached, we have also extended democratic control over the Commission. The European

[The Prime Minister]

Parliament will in future have authority to call the Commission to account for its expenditure and for the operation of financial control systems. Individuals will be able to petition the Parliament about abuses by any of the Community's institutions. The Parliament will appoint an ombudsman to investigate maladministration by any of the Community's institutions, including the Commission.

The treaty also sets exactly the framework that we want for economic and monetary union. It provides a commitment to open and competitive markets, a commitment that this country has sought for years and that many felt might never be available from our Community partners. It sets tough economic tests that any member state wanting to move to stage 3 would have to pass. The framework contains a commitment to price stability. Above all, it contains an absolute right for the United Kingdom—its Parliament—to decide later, and at a time of its own choosing, whether or not it wishes to move to the third stage of economic and monetary union. Those are arguments that we have won in Europe and that set policy in the direction in which we believe it should go.

There are differences in the House and across the House about some of those issues. The Opposition, notably the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and many of his right hon. and hon. Friends, have said that they would be prepared to throw away our carefully negotiated right to join the single currency or not. One may ask precisely what they mean by that. They mean that they commit themselves now to enter a single currency in unknown economic circumstances in the future, with the Community at an unknown size and with economic convergence at an unknown level. They would have had to commit this country to a procedure whereby, regardless of Parliament's views, other member states could oblige us to move to stage 3, which would be a profound mistake for this country.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No, I shall not, as I wish to make more progress.

The Opposition have also latched on to the social chapter in what I consider to be a triumph of ideology over common sense. Signing the social chapter would have removed from employers and employees in this country their right to determine for themselves such matters as working conditions. The social chapter would have given the unions at European level new powers to negotiate employment conditions on behalf of employees, whether or not they were trade union members, and to have agreements imposed through Community legislation on British employees. That is corporatism at its worst. Worse than that, it is the negation of subsidiarity. Those Opposition Members who support subsidiarity cannot, in logic, support the social chapter. Characteristically, the Opposition's reasoned amendment does both those things.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): How does the Prime Minister's interpretation of article 3b encompass the stocktaking exercise that he claims to be conducting on the government of Scotland?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman does no good to his arguments about Scotland by bringing them into this instance. I have made it clear to the House that I will take stock of the Scottish position quite apart from the Maastricht treaty, and that I am doing. The hon. Gentleman must be patient. I will take stock in my own time and then bring out proposals.

The Opposition have learnt only one thing. Over the past 20 years, they have held six different policies on Europe. The Leader of the Opposition has held two contradictory views at the same time. Now it seems that Labour accepts and supports Britain's membership of the European Community. I welcome that unreservedly, not least because, if there is broad agreement about membership, it will lend more strength to Britain's voice in Europe.

Labour's vision of Europe, however, is distorted. Labour Members can hardly wait to sign up to every centralising dream; to every high-spending regional policy; to every statist attempt to regiment working practices; to every central effort to direct industrial policy. Where they have failed at home, they hoped that they would succeed in Europe.

The future of Europe is now based on a different foundation. It is based on free trade and competition, on openness to our neighbours, on a proper definition of the limits of the power of the Commission, and on providing a framework for co-operation between member states outside the treaty of Rome. That is the Conservative vision of Europe; it is where the future of Europe will lie; and it is a future based on Conservative principles.

In this House and across the country, we debated the Maastricht issues before and immediately after the last European Council. In some of our partner countries, that debate is only now being held, but I have little doubt that all our partners will ratify the treaty by the end of our presidency in the second half of this year. As we debate the treaty, it is right to look at some of the issues that we shall have to tackle during our presidency and beyond.

The concept first put forward, I think, by Ernest Bevin —of being able to buy a ticket at Victoria station and travel freely anywhere in Europe—is attractive. It appeals to the instincts. The freedom to move goods and services lies at the heart of the single market which we British pressed on the Community. But there is a practical problem, recognised in the text of the Single European Act and its accompanying declarations.

All of us in this country live daily with the evils of terrorism and drug smuggling. No one doubts that we have to control immigration, in the best interests of everyone who lives in this country. The issue of the open frontier must be treated rationally, not ideologically. For most of our partners, the idea of an open frontier does not mean that there should be no limitations on what goods and people travel from one country to another. It reflects the fact that they cannot control these matters at the frontier and have therefore devised internal controls to do so.

Our practice is different by virtue of our island status. Experience has shown us that control at the frontier gives us the best possible chance of containing smuggling, terrorism and illegal immigration. We accept the right of Community citizens to move freely between member states, but we must, as we agreed under the Single European Act, keep the controls that we consider necessary to control immigration from third-world

countries and to combat terrorism, crime and trafficking in drugs. That means that we must retain frontier controls, and we intend to do so.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Does the Prime Minister recall publishing on Thursday last week in the *Official Report* a reply to a question by me in which he admitted that neither he nor the Government had the foggiest idea of the number of constables in this country and in particular of their numbers at British ports? That makes nonsense of all the humbug in his remarks that we need to control what comes into and goes out of British ports.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has clearly not understood a word of what has been said in the past five minutes but that—if I may say so—is his problem, not mine.

I believe——

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I thank the Prime Minister for giving way to me on that point. Will he recall that we are not only one island but that we have a land frontier in the same way that other member states have a land frontier, and that therefore the control—the necessary control—of immigration and other matters is not merely a matter of port controls?

The Prime Minister: We are well aware of that, and the special relationships that exist between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have existed for a long time, as the hon. Gentleman well knows.

I believe that the development——

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The Prime Minister expresses excellent sentiments, but it is widely reported that the European Commission is likely to challenge in every respect our attitude to frontiers, and to call for the free movement of people and vehicles, as stated in the Maastricht treaty. In such circumstances, which seem likely to arise after 1 January next year, will the Government make it clear what their attitude would be to a decision by the European Court insisting that all frontier controls must be removed?

The Prime Minister: If indeed it challenges them, as my hon. Friend fears, I have just set out the view that the British Government will take. We believe that those frontier controls should be maintained, and we believe that the declaration that Mrs. Thatcher obtained in 1985 recognised that fact. We shall fight very fiercely for the fact that that is the position in law.

I believe that developments in the former Soviet Union and in eastern Europe are more significant——

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

The Prime Minister: Yes, of course.

Mr. Shore: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way on this extremely important point.

It is absolutely right and rational that we should have control over goods and people coming into our own land —that is part of the meaning of being an independent state —but the question put to the Prime Minister a moment ago was not answered. The question is, if the disagreement or clash over the claim to have a Europe without frontiers and our claim to have the right to defend those frontiers in the way described goes to the European Court, will it not be for the court to decide under the treaty, not the British Government? What does the Prime Minister say about that?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman sets out the legal position. I have set out the position that I believe is the case with the declaration that was attached to the Single European Act in the mid-1980s, a declaration that expressly made the point that our frontier controls would remain. That is a point—if the question is raised by the Commission—that we shall debate and argue at that stage.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend will be aware that we had a full debate in the House on the Single European Act. The House was given the assurance that the Luxembourg compromise still existed—in other words, where our vital national interests are at stake, the Luxembourg compromise would apply. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that in the last resort we could still resort to the Luxembourg compromise?

The Prime Minister: Yes, of course that is correct. The Luxembourg compromise is a delaying mechanism—it is not wholly the end of the matter, as my hon. Friend knows. It still exists and has recently been reaffirmed by other member states, so there is no doubt that, as my hon. Friend intimates, the Luxembourg compromise is still there.

I believe that the developments in the former Soviet Union and across eastern Europe are more significant for the future of the Community than any other development since we joined 20 years ago. By 1995, I hope that Sweden, Austria and Finland will be members. During our presidency, we shall prepare the ground for those enlargement negotiations. By the end of the decade, I hope that Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia will have followed suit. Other countries will follow. The Community will have to develop its relationship with the Baltic states and with many of the countries of the former Soviet Union.

The politics, economics and social fabric of the Community will change radically as the Community enlarges. We shall have to show imagination, flexibility and generosity. It would be fatal to take the attitude that we have our prosperous club and that nobody else can join unlesss they are prepared to pay a heavy price. We—the Community, this country—would all pay a heavy price if, by our attitude, we damaged the chance of re-establishing for the first time in 50 years a firm democracy throughout the whole of Europe.

Some argue that enlargement points to more being done at the Community level. I believe that a Community of 20 member states will need the sort of flexibility that we have shown in the Maastricht treaty. A lot more will have to be done on the basis of intergovernmental co-operation. A lot more may be left to the national level. The changes that we have negotiated do not weaken what is valuable in the treaty of Rome. They do create the flexible framework we need as the Community reaches out to new members. The institutions of the Community must adapt to the needs of the members and not the other way round.

What should not and need not be negotiable are the core beliefs and foundations of the Community: its commitment to democracy, its framework of law, the creation of a genuine single market and the fact that the Community exists to promote the ever closer union of the peoples of Europe.

[The Prime Minister]

We in this generation have the opportunity and the responsibility for managing the biggest transition to democracy in our continent in its entire history. There will be many means at our disposal for achieving that, both national and international. I have no doubt that crucial among them is the European Community. If we had to point towards one endeavour that can consolidate European democracy, boost our collective European economic prosperity and enhance our collective international influence, it is the European Community.

Sometimes the national interest and the Community's interests are at variance. Where they are, we shall fight as we have done in the past for our national interest. But I have no doubt that, overall, through the European Community, our national interest can best be promoted. At Maastricht we obtained a good deal for this country. We improved the way in which the Community works. We set the basis for the growth and expansion of the Community in the years ahead. I believe that that was a good deal for this country and for Europe. I invite the House to have confidence in our future in Europe, and to approve the Bill.

4.26 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

"declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which keeps the United Kingdom outside the scope of the Protocol on Social Policy, thereby excludes the United Kingdom from the Social Chapter and prevents the people of the United Kingdom from being part of the full social dimension of the European Community to which its eleven partners have agreed in order to facilitate greater protection for employed people in their working conditions, better rights of consultation and information, equality of treatment and opportunities for men and women and the integration into the labour force of long term unemployed people, including disabled workers, deeply regrets the Government's failure to make any attempt to build into the Maastricht Treaty convergence criteria which emphasise the need for balanced development, a high level of employment and sustainable growth in the regions and countries of the Community; deplores the fact that the opt-out provisions of the Treaty on the approach to Monetary Union would mean that neither the European Monetary Institute nor the proposed European Central Bank are likely to be located in Britain; and regrets the fact that the Bill does not include provisions to strengthen co-operation between the sovereign nations of the Community, within a structure of subsidiarity, to enhance political, social, environmental, economic and technological progress throughout Europe and in the developing countries, or to ensure the maximum of democratic accountability of current and future Community institutions to national parliaments and to the European Parliament."

The Labour party has already made it clear that it broadly supports the treaty concluded at Maastricht because it is a necessary framework for the economic, social and political development of the European Community. The treaty provides for majority voting on issues of the environment and on certain other important matters such as youth training and public health. It entrenches the democratic principle of subsidiarity so that decisions are taken at the most appropriate level—local, national or Community. It establishes a cohesion fund and provides for regional policy to be an essential component of the single market.

We welcome these changes, and we welcome also the fact that the European Parliament is to get new powers that will help to close the democratic deficit caused by the fact that powers and decisions have been ceded to the Commission and other Community institutions. All those and other features of the treaty are worthy of support.

We cannot, however, extend that support to the Bill. We cannot endorse the Government's action in opting out of the agreements made by the 11 other European Community member countries on social policy and on the approach to economic and monetary union. Both those decisions by the Government will disadvantage the British people. The social policy opt-out would be reason enough by itself to justify refusal to support the Bill.

Eleven other Community countries—countries with conservative, socialist and coalition Governments—all endorse the social chapter that was agreed at Maastricht. They will all take decisions on social policy on the basis of qualified majority voting on specific matters. The United Kingdom, because of the Government's opt-out, will not be able to vote on those decisions or be part of the deliberations on those decisions. That is not an assertion of sovereignty; it is a resignation of sovereignty.

The Government argue, of course, as we heard again this afternoon from the Prime Minister, that to accept the social chapter and qualified majority voting would have a devastating effect on British labour relations. Both the Prime Minister and the former Secretary of State for Employment, the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), have used increasingly lurid language to say that the implementation of the social chapter would mean strikes and giving trade unions abroad authority on labour law matters—we heard that again from the Prime Minister this afternoon—and would bring the country to its knees. The Prime Minister said this afternoon that it would be corporatism at its worst. Not one of those or any similar allegations made by the Prime Minister or others in government is actually true. Every one of those absurd claims is rebutted by the terms of the agreement which 11 other Community countries reached at Maastricht.

Article 2.6 of the social chapter says:

"The provisions of this Article shall not apply to pay, the right of association, the right to strike or the right to impose lock-outs."

Article 3, which provides for agreements to be made between management and labour at a Community level, was prompted by a joint initiative from the employers' organisation UNICE and the European TUC. There is no question of such agreements superseding the Commission, the Council or Governments by altering trade union or strike laws.

The social chapter also makes that clear. It states:

"this arrangement implies no obligation on Member States to apply the agreements, to work out rules for their transposition, nor any obligation to amend national legislation."

As the employers say:

"Our clear understanding is that the Article cannot be used in any way connected with laws relating to strikes or Unions and in any event we would not agree to any arrangement that did have that effect."

All of that, and much more in and about the social chapter, makes absolute nonsense of the Government's claim that the social chapter would wreck or cripple the economy.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Would the right hon. Gentleman, whom I think we all respect, say why he is worried about the social chapter exclusion when the Commission can shove through everything that is in the social chapter under the terms of the Single European Act? Indeed, it is already doing so with the 48-hour week and the parental leave directive. I ask the right hon. Gentleman, who I know studies these matters, what can the Commission do under the social chapter that it cannot already do under the Single European Act by majority voting? It is doing that today and it will be doing it again next week.

Mr. Kinnock: It would be appropriate for the hon. Gentleman to take up his complaints about the Single European Act with the Prime Minister or with the former Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, who was responsible for introducing it. Meanwhile, I shall continue to argue—as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will permit—that the claims made by the Prime Minister and his colleagues about the impact of the social chapter on Britain or, indeed, any other country are absolute fantasies. There will be none of the disadvantageous effects that the Prime Minister pretends there will be.

The Government must know that all that I say about their description of the effects of the social chapter is true, so why do they employ such fictions? Why did we hear wild allegations from the Prime Minister again this afternoon? The answer is simple—the Government need the false threat of what the Prime Minister calls disruption and militancy to cover up their desertion of duty to the British people on matters of everyday concern to individuals at work.

The Government refuse to accept the social chapter, which makes provision for qualified majority voting so that the Community can support and complement the activities of member states in

"improvement . . . of the working environment to protect workers' health and safety; working conditions; the information and consultation of workers; equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work"

and the integration into the labour force of the long-term unemployed, including disabled workers.

Those commitments are, to say the least, not excessive provisions in a modern economy or a democratic society. But the Government recoil from them. This Government, unlike any other Government in the Community, reject them. The excuse that they offer for their opt-out is that accepting such provisions for individual employees rights in Britain would make our economy less competitive.

What the Prime Minister calls, as he did in his speech in the debate on the Queen's Speech, "the social charter paraphernalia," will, he says, hold Britain back. But do good conditions really prevent improvement? Do inadequate conditions really breed greater achievement? We in Britain have plenty of experience from which to learn. British men work longer hours than any others in the EC. Ours is the only country in the Community without statutory paid annual leave. In the United Kingdom, statutory sickness leave is barely half the average in the Community. Measured in terms of equivalent full weeks of maternity pay, payments to women on maternity leave in Britain are the lowest in the Community. Portugal and Ireland are the only other two countries in the EC where there is no statutory right to parental leave. In all those and in many other ways, including the treatment of part-time workers, conditions for individual workers in Britain lag well behind those of employees in most or all of the other Community countries.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): If what the right hon. Gentleman has enunciated is the case, why did he and his party vote against the Single European Act when it came before the House?

Mr. Kinnock: For the simple reason, as I pointed out during our debate in December and as the hon. Gentleman will know if he attended it, that it included no obligation to the social charter. On the contrary, the Government of that day, like the Government of this day, were against the social charter in principle even though they are obliged to accept certain provisions now made under the charter.

When we bear in mind the conditions that I accurately described and the comparison made with those in much of the rest of the Community, we have to conclude that, if fewer rights, lower standards and worse conditions for workers were ingredients of success, Britain would surely be top of all the Community's economic leagues. Yet we are the only major EC economy in prolonged recession. We have the fastest growing rate of unemployment in the Community and a huge increase in long-term unemployment. We have the worst fall in investment.

When all that is clear, whatever else can be said about inferior working conditions, they certainly do not make for superior economic performance. They never have and they never will, and it is high time that the Government faced up to that and stopped hoping that, if they can make Britain into the labour market bargain basement of Europe, they will have some edge over our competitors. That cannot work and it will not work. That is why the Government's social chapter opt-out is not only an injustice against the British people, but also contradicts Britain's economic interests. Sadly, that is also true of the Government's other opt-out—the economic and monetary union opt-out.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Unlike the right hon. Gentleman, I voted for the European Communities Act in 1972 and do not need lessons from him about being a good European.

Of course we are all concerned about the unemployed—that goes without saying—but can he explain why the two countries among our partners that have most fully implemented the recommendations of the social chapter to which the Opposition's amendment refers have the highest percentage of their populations unemployed?

Mr. Kinnock: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should talk in those terms. He should recognise his complicity as a supporter of a Government whose policies have taken unemployment in Britain back up to 2·75 million and produced yesterday a third of a million rise in long-term unemployment and whose record—although I am sure that as an individual he sympathises with the unemployed—shows a lack of concern for unemployment and for the conditions of those who are employed. Otherwise, he would support the social chapter of the Maastricht agreement.

The opt-out over economic and monetary union was contrived by the Prime Minister to mollify the former leader of the Conservative party and her followers. That policy means that the Government cannot say—even in circumstances in which monetary convergence has been

[Mr. Kinnock]

achieved, and in which other countries are going ahead with monetary union—whether they want Britain to join that union, or tell us their recommendations. However, they must do so soon—much sooner than the Prime Minister would like, judging by his comments today.

At Maastricht, the Government agreed to a timetable for the approach to economic and monetary union which makes it clear that its formation will not be left to decisions to be taken in 1997 or 1999, but will depend on preparatory decisions taken after stage 2 of the process of union starts on 1 January 1994—which will probably be within the lifetime of this Parliament.

The Government will have to make specific proposals to the House and to take action by then. They will not be able to opt out of that. Neither will the Government be able to avoid questions about their judgment and recommendations to the House as the process of union advances according to the Government-agreed timetable.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): As the Government have made clear their commitment to convergence and have not opted out of discussions about the shape of economic and monetary union, why does the right hon. Gentleman want to deny the House the right to take the final decision? That seems a strange position for a politician to take in a democracy.

Mr. Kinnock: The hon. Gentleman has followed the debate closely and is very interested in these matters, so he will probably recall that I have said on three or four occasions that our approach is not based on an objection to the House having the vote. That is entirely appropriate. I said—and this is becoming increasingly true—that other Parliaments in the European Community will as a matter of convention want to participate in decisions as we move forward. It is not that some special deal has been struck by the Government in respect of decisions relating to the progress towards union. Our involvement in this House is necessary—and comparable involvement will be common throughout the Community.

Mr. Shore: Is it correct to infer from my right hon. Friend's remarks that he would find no objection to the existing protocol and articles on economic and monetary union, and that he is prepared to see a Labour Government and a Labour Chancellor, caught in the 3 per cent. gross domestic product public borrowing rule, being subject to penalties under the European treaties if they broke that rule? Is not that sufficient reason for any leader of any party in this country to object to EMU?

Mr. Kinnock: My right hon. Friend also follows these matters, and will be aware that in December, and on many other occasions, I said that the policy of the party that I lead—I am certain that this will continue to be its policy—is, subject to the conditions of convergence, to favour the movement towards union, because that would serve the interests of the people of our country and the wider interests of the Community. Those who do not share that view must consider that there is no halfway house or semi-detached status for our country, and that if we stood back from convergence, there would be damaging consequences as other countries move towards economic and monetary union. If my right hon. Friend will allow me, I will address the subject of deficits later.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): There is a considerable difference between financial, monetary and economic convergence—and it is the latter that my right hon. Friend has strongly approved. However, is there not a lesson to be learned from events in Germany, which is transferring between £50 billion and £60 billion a year from west Germany to east Germany, but is still failing to achieve the economic convergence that my right hon. Friend and I want to see?

Mr. Kinnock: The German example is instructive, but Germany does not have to counter—as the British Government do—a deep recession caused by Government policies. Germany is taking on the unprecedented challenge of amalgamating an efficient economy with a disastrously inefficient economy. It is natural in those circumstances that Germany should use more resources and make calls on international markets. Despite that huge challenge, Germany has managed to sustain a positive growth rate in excess of 2·5 per cent.—whereas Britain suffered a negative growth rate of 2·5 per cent. over the latest period.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) shares my confidence that we should persist with a policy—typified by Germany—that reflects a determination to raise standards of living, generate employment and increase investment. That is the model that we should all follow. Instead of greeting economic difficulties with the kind of defeatism that is obvious on the Conservative Benches, we should go for expansionist policies, so that we do not end up with 2·75 million of our fellow citizens unemployed for the second time in 10 years.

As the Government come to make their decisions in the near future, uppermost in their minds should be the reality that the European Community has an increasingly interdependent and integrated economy. That is of special relevance and primary significance for our country. Sixty per cent. of our exports now go to other EC countries. The leading importer of British goods is Germany. France comes next, and then the United States—which used to take most of our exports. It is closely followed by the Netherlands.

That is the pattern of our trade now and that tendency will increase as we move closer to the single market and the Community is joined by other countries such as Austria, Sweden and—as we heard again this week—Switzerland, and as products and production processes become increasingly integrated in multinational companies.

Given that exports account for one third of our gross domestic product, a large proportion of our production capacity and of British jobs depend on sales in the Community. That basic consideration should guide Government policy on economic and monetary union. The growing interdependence to which I referred will make it essential for the British Government to play a full and constructive role in the process of achieving the economic and monetary union that is under way.

It is not enough for the Government to content themselves with monetary convergence and then to stand back. If only that were on offer, the future would be bleak. Low inflation, low interest rates and manageable levels of public borrowing are all important elements of stability. However, if the Community's future is left at that, the stability achieved could be the stability of stagnation—

with continuing high unemployment, low growth, low standards of competitive performance and even worse imbalances between regions.

No member of the Community could benefit from a continuation of such difficulties—which is why it is essential that the Community gives real substance to the task that it defines for itself in article 2 of the Maastricht treaty, of promoting harmonious and balanced development, sustainable and non-inflationary growth, respect for the environment, convergence of economic performance, a high level of employment and social protection, economic and social cohesion and solidarity between member states.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): That is not in the Bill.

Mr. Kinnock: That hon. Gentleman may be among those who will deviate from the line taken by the Prime Minister. We were invited to vote for a Bill that embraces the treaty, with the exception of the opt-outs. I have just quoted from article 2. It is very much included in the Bill.

All 12 countries have subscribed to those purposes. They must now be turned into action by policies of co-ordinated and sustained expansion across the Community.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kinnock: No. I have given way several times, so I shall desist for the moment.

That co-ordinated expansion is the only way systematically to reduce unemployment in the Community. More than 16 million people are now unemployed, many of them aged under 25. Co-ordinated expansion is certainly the best way in which to achieve balance in the Community between the impoverished regions and the congested urban areas, and between the north and the south of the Community. Co-ordinated expansion is also the best way of obtaining convergence in investment, production, competitiveness and employment —the real convergence that is necessary for the long-term success of the Community and for the long-term success of any form of monetary union.

It is clear, moreover, that co-ordinated expansion is vital as the most effective antidote to the resentments and tensions that are rooted in economic disadvantage and insecurity. The Maastricht treaty provides a framework for such action. It gives the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers the power and the responsibility to monitor economic performance and it enables the member states and the Council to act as the focus for concerted action. It is an essential basis for the advance that must take place. What is needed now is the willingness to build on that and to see that European countries move forward together.

I urge the Government to show such willingness. I urge them to work for such expansion and not to go on accepting high unemployment, poverty and regional imbalance within our own country and within the Community.

Within a few weeks, the Prime Minister will become President of the Council of Ministers. He has said that he wants to be at the heart of Europe; that he wants to foster enlargement of the Community; that he wants to reach out to the countries of eastern and central Europe. I put it to the Prime Minister that he can show genuine commitment to those objectives only if he uses his period in the presidency for the purpose of promoting economic expansion and social justice throughout the Community. Then, as even his Conservative colleagues recognise, he will be fostering the combination that is needed to ensure the existence of vitality and confidence in the west of Europe, and to promote stability, hope and strong democracy in the east.

We shall be doing everything possible to make the Government pursue those purposes. Let me commend to the Prime Minister, as a reminder of the need to do that, the advice of Hans-Dietrich Genscher, given as he left his position as Foreign Minister in Germany a few days ago. Herr Genscher said:

> "People who hark back to yesterday's dreams may try to escape down nationalistic paths. The only way of barring off such routes is to open the road to Europe. This demands great effort and solidarity. If we fail in that task, we will face incalculable consequences for our own stability and prosperity."

I hope that the Prime Minister will heed that advice, and will get rid of his opt-out mentality. If he does not, he will not begin to fulfil the task that he has set himself; he will not serve the best interests of Europe; and, most of all, he will not do his full duty to our country and its people.

4.53 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): Earlier, Madam Speaker, you advised us of the virtues of restraint in the light of the number of hon. Members who wish to speak. Let me make a personal affirmation. I believe that all out-of-work Privy Councillors are born-again Back Benchers, and I shall approach my remarks in that spirit. They will necessarily be limited, I hope to 10 minutes or so, and I trust that my colleagues will appreciate that. I shall consult tomorrow's Division list to find out whether gratitude is a lost art in politics.

I wish to make three brief points. The first is a philosophical observation about the nature of Community debates, while the second relates to the objectives of Community policy, which have been furthered in the debates so far. Finally, I want to consider the mechanics which serve those objectives, and which have led to the Bill and the treaty on which the House will vote.

Let me say a word about our approach to debates such as this. I believe that they have been fundamentally transformed by the cataclysmic events of recent years, which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister described as the liberation of 400 million people in eastern Europe. Their introduction into the realistic European dimension really has altered, and should alter, all our concepts and judgments. There are no sacred cows left in our debate.

It is perfectly legitimate for those who argued at one stage on the basis of—almost—the immaculate conception of the Rome treaty and its derivatives to ask now what basic reforms are needed for that very structure, to enable the new Europe to arise out of the ashes of the old. That is the nature of our position today. There is no point in our engaging in a great and glorious discussion about how things looked in 1972, or at any time subsequently. The truth is that we are all constrained to try to look at the problems anew.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. On 28 April, he addressed a meeting at the Albert hall which concerned the great European issues, and the need to establish principles that would give us working parameters within which to conduct policy. He said:

[Mr. John Biffen]

"I make no secret of my view that we want a Europe that is a community of nation states."

Of course we can argue about what powers are appropriate to a nation state, but they certainly go considerably further than the ability to enter the Eurovision song contest; as though we might say we now have a cultural identity, which is what really matters. I assert that nation states are about administration, law-making, enforcement, and engaging the loyalty of a population and its preparedness to accept discipline.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister went on to say:

"A wider Europe of nations working in partnership, reaching to"—

these I think are the vital words—

"and embracing Russia itself—that is our goal."

Embracing Russia itself is the most challenging of the commitments in which we now engage ourselves. The challenge of the east faces not only the British Government but—obviously and, indeed, primarily—the Germans. My right hon. Friend made a particularly telling and effective point when he talked of an extension "embracing Russia itself" because, clearly, that is not the German view. On 3 April, Herr Kohl made a keynote speech, which the *Financial Times* reported as follows:

"Former republics of the Soviet Union should not be allowed to join the European Community".

There will be a debate on the issue. I wish my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister every success in encouraging within the German federal republic the view that a happy and well-judged Europe is one that extends from the Atlantic to the Urals, in which Russia is one of the great historic nations. Its exclusion can but lead to difficulties in due course.

That leads me to the whole question of the mechanics that should serve such a policy. That question really lies behind this afternoon's debate. I should like to put up a broad and most anodyne proposition: that we shall secure that wider partnership on the basis of encouraging national co-operation rather than greater centralisation. Much of the argument today, tomorrow and in Committee is bound to turn on the extent to which we think that Maastricht encourages centralism and Euro-size to a degree that is counter-productive in terms of what should be our national policy.

I take, I hope, a reasonably generous attitude on all these matters. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on, in particular, the development of the intergovernmental concept. That is a valuable improvement. It has great prospective benefits for the future. However, when I look at the treaty, I have to admit that I have considerable reservations about it. It still contains a great deal of centralist commitment. The whole concept of the single currency will bring about a powerful force for centralism in the economic management of those countries that make up the European Community. I do not believe that we can have a single currency without a complementary movement in other economic forces generally.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): That must be right.

Mr. Biffen: I am willing to bear the cross of the support given to me by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown).

As I look through the treaty on European union, I reflect, first, upon the role of the European central bank, which will be crucial, also upon article 99, which relates to indirect tax harmonisation, article 104c, relating to controls over Government borrowing and article 130d, relates to the cohesion fund. All these measures have a centralising concept because of the single currency.

There is a tendency to believe that, because of the welcome terms negotiated, this House should take another view on these matters before final decision, which will have retarding consequences. I do not entirely understand that view. I wish that we could have a simultaneous debate with all the other parliamentary assemblies within the Community. I should love to know whether they have the same somewhat restrained commitment to the single currency. I should like to know whether there is the same general unease about these matters.

I refer not to the debate so far this afternoon, which has been carried on at what can be described as a stratospheric level, but to the more mundane discussions that one has in the Tea Room. I get the impression that the argument there goes along these lines, "Don't get too anxious; it's not going to happen," as though the treaty were a piece of shoddy electrical work which would collapse before we had had much time to make use of it. I do not believe that we can adopt that rather casual attitude towards the Maastricht treaty.

There is a considerable requirement, therefore, for us to view the legislation with caution, if not circumspection. When the European Community was founded, there were powerful forces which drove it towards the consequence of the Messina agreement and the eventual treaty of Rome. We are now faced with the immensely difficult and challenging task, in the Prime Minister's words, of a Community embracing Russia itself. Let us make no mistake about the diplomatic, political and economic implications. There is no popular movement for that in Europe today. We have only to look at the signs. I do not take the roll call with any satisfaction, but there are the Front National in France, the republicans in Germany and the Lombard league in Italy. Those are not the heirs of the traditions of de Gaspari and Adenauer.

This Parliament can contribute constructive caution. We should seek European co-operation, based upon the IGC principle, not the enthronement or the taking forward of principles which belong to the supranationality of the treaty of Rome and the European Court. Tomorrow will be a foregone conclusion. I know that in the Ayes Lobby there will be the Goliaths—the Goliaths of numbers, of talents, of the received wisdom of the Foreign Office—and that in the Noes Lobby there will be a handful of street politicians. The instinctive prejudices and wisdom of street politicians hold the key to Europe's future, not those of the good and the great.

5.4 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Prime Minister put a somewhat optimistic interpretation on what had been achieved at Maastricht. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) put his finger on two important matters: that the whole architecture of Europe has changed during the last three or four years and that entirely new approaches are needed if we are to get anything like the wider Europe that many of us wish to achieve.

It is an irony, which I believe commentators and historians will note, that the thrust towards economic and monetary union and the whole enterprise that led to the Maastricht treaty was put into shape and launched just before eastern Europe was liberated and the Berlin wall came down. Most of the assumptions behind the launch towards a federal Europe, which is the underlying thrust of the treaty, were entirely consistent with the Europe that had existed up to the end of the cold war, the liberation of eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The leaders of the European Community, particularly Mr. Delors and, above all, France and Germany, have been pushing hard and deliberately for a federal development in Europe. The House should not seek to evade that very obvious fact. We all remember that, until almost the last moment, draft article A of the treaty on European union said:

"the High Contracting parties establish among themselves a Union. This treaty marks a new stage in a process leading gradually to a union with a federal goal."

Article W said:

"A Conference of Representatives of Governments of the Member States shall be convened in 1996 in the perspective of strengthening the Federal character of the Union."

There is no doubt whatsoever about what was in the minds of the great majority of our continental neighbours, and certainly in the mind of the Commission when it began to draft and push forward this treaty. I am very glad that that article was dropped, and I congratulate the Government on achieving it. However, that did not change the character and nature of the treaty; it simply changed the wording of the introductory and closing articles. That is a very different matter.

The single currency, to which the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North referred, is very much at the heart of the treaty. If we want to build a federal Europe, of course we must have a single currency and a single central bank. That is the principal thrust of the treaty. The Government could say, "There is an opt-out article," or, "We have not yet opted in and we have reserved our position." I am glad that they have reserved our position. The last thing that I would want would be to have our position conceded.

However, that does not alter the fact that, through this device, the Government have, in a sense, evaded facing the central question, which is where Britain is to go, faced with neighbours in the European Community the great majority of whom wish for a different future and a different destiny from that which our own people want. We have to face the fact that, almost from the start, our neighbours have wanted a federal union on the continent of Europe, and the British people have never wanted that. I understand why Governments are reluctant to face the issue. The moment the British people are alerted to what really is at stake, their deep reluctance and hostility to it will come out. Successive Governments have not wanted to face that fact at all. As a result, we indulge in all kinds of evasion, deception and self-deception.

On evasion, we cannot sensibly discuss whether the thrust and intention are federalist, because none of us poor things can actually agree on what federalism is. We say that it is too complicated and far too difficult. That is rubbish. It is a basically simple concept, and everyone knows it. It means an extra tier of government which is superior to the present national tier of government, to which are transferred basic decision-making powers. Not a single federal state in the world today lacks those characteristics.

Such a state conducts the trade and commercial relations of the whole union. It has a single currency and a single bank. It has a common citizenship, with no control, obviously, over residence and movement in and out of the separate component states which form a united state. Finally, it has competence over foreign and defence policy. That has broadly described the United States.

We must look at Europe today and at what is proposed in the treaty, and measure that against it. We surrendered a trade and common commercial policy ages ago. The single currency and single bank are the great issues in the treaty. Yes, common citizenship is in the treaty, but nobody has discussed it. Apparently, all of us are to be jammed together in a single citizenship. Has anyone asked one person in this land whether he or she wishes to have that additional citizenship, what obligations that involves, not necessarily now but in the future, and what rights it would bestow? What is all this about a Europe without frontiers, except to demolish the whole idea of a nation state having sovereignty and control over its own frontiers?

I agree that the Foreign Secretary fought hard to keep foreign policy in a different category from the European Community's treaty structure. It is still part of the treaty of union. Those who think that there is not a serious threat that other states will take over foreign policy and defence had better look again at that commitment to a further intergovernmental conference in 1996, and think again that it was only in 1986 that we were entirely content—nobody in the House wished to change it—with political co-operation; that is, where possible and where sensible, to speak with a single voice. We have gone well beyond that.

The basic point on foreign policy is a commitment. Article J.1 states:

"The Union and its Member States shall define and implement a common foreign and security policy".

That is it—define. We do not yet have majority voting for that, but right hon. and hon. Members and I know that, in 1996, others will be hammering on the door and saying that Britain alone is preventing the emergence of a European collective foreign and defence policy.

By not facing those issues, we do no service to ourselves and none at all to our people. As I have said, there was not just a failure to face facts but deception and self-deception. The Government are deceiving themselves about the opt-out clause. I am glad that it is there. As the Chancellor clearly said in his speech to the Confederation of British Industry, and as the Governor of the Bank of England said in the present quarterly issue of the *Bank of England Journal* that was published today, it is absolutely clear that we must start converging financially with the European Community so that we can be eligible and able to join in four years. We shall see, in public expenditure exercises, tax cuts and in the whole range of policy, efforts to squeeze the country into the framework of the European commitment to join an economic and monetary union. We shall see, whatever the circumstances, the public sector borrowing requirement coming down to 3 per cent. of GDP. That is it—it is in the treaty.

Once we converge on those financial indicators, the Government will hardly say, "It was not worth it. The whole effort was an absurdity. We are suffering. We have high unemployment, high interest rates and all those

[Mr. Peter Shore]

disadvantages. In spite of all that, and having made that the central theme of our economic policy for the past four years, we should not join the economic and monetary union third stage." The Government are deceiving themselves by using that device.

My own right hon. Friends have contributed enormously to self-deception. They seem to think that we are discussing not the treaty that is before us but a make-believe, fantasy treaty which contains precisely the clauses that they would like to see. But it does not. The parliamentary party had circulated to it only a few days ago a paper giving some guidance from the shadow Treasury team about the Maastricht treaty and what it means. My right hon. Friend echoed it today. It said that, because article 2 of the treaty contains a reference among 10 lines to the purpose of achieving a high level of employment and sustainable growth, that put those objectives on a par with the achievement of economic and monetary union.

That briefing paper went on to state:

"from our point of view this"—

that is, that reference to a high level of unemployment—

"is the most important part of the entire treaty. It establishes the aims of sustainable growth and a high level of employment as economic goals of equal importance with price stability."

My right hon. Friend and the briefing paper were referring to a few words in one general paragraph at the beginning of the treaty—article 2. What economic and monetary union have to say about it and what they are concerned about above all, as we all know, is price stability. There are 50 clauses and four protocols spelling out precisely how that is to be achieved. Not a single clause spells out anything about the employment objective. We deceive ourselves if we try to pretend that the objectives of a high level of employment and price stablity are on all fours. It just is not so.

Incidentally, if anyone wants to argue the toss, article 105 begins:

"The primary objective of the ESCB shall be to maintain price stability. Without prejudice to the objective of price stability, the ESCB shall support the general economic policies in the Community".

Therefore, provided that it does not prejudice the objective of price stability, which in this context is a deflationary objective, it may pursue those other policies which are clearly more acceptable and agreeable to my right hon. Friends.

Are we in our party imagining a future in which the country, with a Labour Government, volunteers to abandon its control over its own budget policy? Do we seriously imagine that, in all good conscience and keeping faith with ourselves and our fellow countrymen, we can say to them that we are willing to place our wrists in the handcuffs of the treaty and let others determine the size of the public sector borrowing requirement from now on, and that, if we refuse to obey the 3 per cent. limit, they will have the power—it is written into the treaty—to inflict fines upon us and to call up credit from British banks to the European bank? I find it objectionable. Frankly, it is a disgrace. No person in the Labour movement could accept that control.

I draw attention to the grave consequences for Britain of economic and monetary union and convergence with it. We have enough unemployment in Britain today.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): Which would the right hon. Gentleman find more objectionable for a Labour Government to be bound by—a single currency and a European bank over which Finance Ministers would have a degree of political control or the terms and conditions that Dr. Witteveen laid down for the Labour Government in 1976?

Mr. Shore: The Minister makes a comparison which is instructive for the whole House. When the International Monetary Fund has inflicted its presence on the British Government in the past, it has visited the Government for a two-month period. The moment that the debts were cleared, out it went. The House has been asked to contemplate a European Commissioner sitting permanently at the Cabinet table dictating the policies of this country. We should be aware of that.

Our level of unemployment is high enough as it is, yet I fear that the combined effects of monetary union on not only the British economy but the rest of Europe will be deflationary, as countries try to come within the constraints of the convergence criteria set out in the treaty. That means that we will be in for a period of still higher unemployment. It will endure for years ahead.

By linking ourselves to a currency dominated by the deutschmark, we link ourselves in a foolish way to the German economy without any possibility of making corrections for its undoubted greater productivity and growth potential. If we had linked ourselves with the German economy at any time in the past 10 years, without the ability to change our exchange rate, we would have suffered terrible penalties, and we know it.

I do not know quite what my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench or the House want. We have tabled many reasoned amendments. I have tabled one, and there are others that I like the look of. I do not object terribly to the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. I think that I could bring myself to support it, but it is somewhat feeble. If any reasoned amendment is rejected, we have a duty to vote against the treaty and the Bill.

5.23 pm

Mr. Kenneth Baker (Mole Valley): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), because in the past 20 years or so, when the arguments for federalism and greater control from the centre have grown, his voice has always been that of scepticism and doubt. For many years, it was a lonely voice. It was made all the more lonely by the fact that his party changed its policy and officially became much more communautaire. He has lived through all that and has reached the stage of seeing the tide begin to turn his way, although it has not turned completely, and I would not like to see it turn as much as he would.

What I thought was interesting about the speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was that he said that, in the next few years, he wanted to see greater flexibility. He wanted to see more things left to national level. Indeed, I hope that that will be the tenor of Government policy during the lifetime of the Government and his premiership. The successful development of Europe will be based on successful intergovernmental co-operation—the point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) made—rather than increasing centralisation.

I noticed that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney intervened on the Leader of the Opposition about economic and monetary union. After an exchange, the Leader of the Opposition said, "It is all perfectly clear." If that is clarity, we await the advent of opacity. It is by no means clear. I suspect that the possibility of a single currency and a single bank will recede rather than grow nearer during the remaining years of the century.

I wish to speak specifically on the matters in which I have had a hand—justice and interior matters. They are germane to the type of Europe that will develop. In the negotiations that led up to Maastricht, we were faced with proposals from our partners to increase the competence of the Commission and bring matters now decided by the Home Secretary and the Home Office and, ultimately, the House of Commons under not only the Commission but the European Court. I am glad to say that my colleagues strongly resisted those proposals. They believed that the way forward was through intergovernmental co-operation.

Indeed, the success of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was that our partners in Europe accepted that there should be three pillars—the pillar of economic and monetary union, which has protection in the treaty that we shall be asked to approve tomorrow, the pillar of foreign affairs and defence matters, and the pillar of justice and home affairs. Those matters should be left to the agreement of Ministers of nation states working together. There must be greater co-operation.

There must also be more co-operation between police forces in Europe to deal with international crime. I should like to see even greater development. I welcome the creation of Europol, which was part of the Maastricht treaty. It is basically a clearing house of information on international drug smuggling. I opposed, and was right to oppose, giving that body operational powers so that it would be a European police force operating in different European countries. We do not want to see such an extension of competence and power.

I wish to deal specifically with the problem of frontiers —a matter on which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was interrupted three times this afternoon. It is an important point. The ability to control one's frontiers is an essential element of the sovereignty of either a national state or a community of states. The European Community is trying to establish an external frontier at which certain things happen when people cross but within which people can move freely.

Mr. Cash: One country.

Mr. Baker: I shall come on to that in a moment.

The problem with the concept of an external frontier for the European Comunity is that of geography. Countries in Europe which are part of the continental land mass find it difficult to police their frontiers. No one wishes to police the frontier between France and Germany, for example. Of course, in this century it has been policed with vigour. In previous centuries, it was policed with even greater vigour. But it is now virtually impossible to police. Similarly, the German-Polish frontier is impossible to police. The Greek islands present great problems, as does the long shoreline of Italy. So the development of an effective external frontier presents very great problems. Indeed, negotiations are continuing.

I say to my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Government that we have the great advantage—they know it only too well—that we are an island. An island can police its frontiers by policing the airports and sea ports around its shore. We must continue to do that. That is what I was particularly anxious to ensure that the Maastricht negotiations did not weaken. I am glad to say that they did not. Certain of our partners wanted to increase the competence of the Commission in such matters. We resisted that.

The competence of the Commission is increased in only two matters. The first is what is called the common visa list. That is sensible. It is a list agreed by all European countries of those countries whose citizens require a visa to come into Europe. That seems to be sensible. It means that the United Kingdom will probably require visas from citizens of at least 20 or 25 more countries.

The second area where we are prepared to concede competence is to agree a common format for visas, which is also sensible, because visas will thus be more forgery-proof.

On the other matters, we said no, and that was correct. We built a double lock into the treaty that we are being asked to approve. Immigration control and asylum, which are sensitive and difficult issues, will not move into the competence of Brussels—either the Commission or the courts—without two events happening. First, it will require the agreement of the British Government and, therefore, the Government have a veto. Secondly, the specific approval of the House will be required. That is the double lock, and it is an effective one.

Alas, the matter does not rest there, as the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney perceived in his intervention on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The right hon. Member has doubts about the Single European Act, rather than merely about the Bill we are debating. Therefore, I shall refer to that Act as it relates to justice and home affairs.

Article 8a, which establishes the principle of the free movement of people, is the important article. When that was agreed during the previous Parliament in 1986, an essential proviso was built in. Mrs. Thatcher, Sir Geoffrey Howe and my right hon. Friend the present Foreign Secretary, who was then the Home Secretary, insisted that article 8a should be qualified by a general declaration, which contained these words:

> "Nothing in these provisions shall affect the right of Member States to take such measures as they consider necessary for the purpose of controlling immigration from third countries."

That is an important undertaking.

I do not believe that Mrs. Thatcher, Sir Geoffrey Howe or the present Foreign Secretary would have asked the House to approve the Single European Act without that general declaration; nor do I believe that the House would have approved the Act without that clear declaration.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the difficulties with the Single European Act was that it was guillotined and that debate on all the issues that could have been properly investigated was curtailed? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be unwise if the House were to make the same mistake about this treaty?

Mr. Baker: I see that my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary is in his place, and he does not have

[Mr. Baker]

cloth ears, so I dare say that he has heard what my hon. Friend has said. As I understand it, the treaty will be debated exhaustively on the Floor of the House, and it is not for me to comment on that.

The House agreed the Single European Act on that declaration, so it is important. We are told that the declaration might not be worth the paper that it is written on. That is the view of some lawyers, but advice differs and others say that the general declaration is of some significance. So there is doubt and difficulty at the centre of this issue.

If that declaration does not count, from 1 January 1993, we shall not be able to operate our present passport and immigration controls at ports and airports, for example at Heathrow, Gatwick, Dover, Liverpool and Manchester. European Community nationals will be able to come here because that is implicit in the treaty—we have all accepted that EC nationals have the freedom to travel, work and reside within the Community—but it is the rights of non-EC nationals to that freedom of movement which are at issue.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Baker: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I shall not give way for a moment.

That right of movement is important, because what has been learned in Britain in the past 30 years, and in Europe in the past five years, is that rights of movement lead to settlement and rights of settlement.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I must pursue my argument.

The retention of passport and immigration controls is of great national importance to Britain. After all, we have taken more than 30 years to establish our system of immigration controls, and they are the most sophisticated in Europe. We have had to deal with migratory pressures that other European countries have not had to deal with until the past four or five years—*[Interruption.]* I know that my hon. Friends are anxious to support my arguments, but will they please hear them first? This is an important issue.

Faced with that dilemma, what should the Government do? They should do three things. First, they must make it absolutely clear, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did at the Dispatch Box this afternoon, to our partners in Europe that it is an essential and important issue for us and that we are not prepared to surrender control over our frontier controls—*[Interruption.]* If my hon. Friends will wait for a moment, please. They should wait with anxiety to find out what I am going to say.

When I was Home Secretary, I constantly gave my fellow Interior Ministers that message. They had to understand the importance of the issue for Britain and for British politics, as far as all parties were concerned. It is important that we say, again and again, to our partners that we cannot make any concessions over frontier controls. We must also say that to the Commission and to Mr. Bangemann. So that is No. 1—*[Interruption.]* I am glad to have the agreement of my hon. and right hon. Friends, but I am only on my first point and I am coming to my second and third.

It is important to say that, because none of the alternatives to frontier controls will be effective. It is said that, if one had internal controls, one would not need——

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baker: I ask my hon. Friend to contain his natural impatience and to listen to my arguments.

If one abandons frontier controls in favour of internal controls, they will not be as effective. There are two types of internal control. The first is to oblige employers not to employ illegal immigrants. If one does that, one has to police it. America has tried that to stem the flow of illegal immigrants from Mexico, but it does not work. Large companies observe the law and medium-sized companies do not. What is more, there would have to be a series of dawn raids on employers to detect those breaking the law. So that does not work.

The second argument is to introduce identity cards—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Some of my hon. Friends have said, "Hear, hear." I am not against introducing identity cards, but they will not be a substitute for frontier controls. Many countries in Europe already have identity cards—cartes d'identitées—but they are not an effective control for dealing with illegal immigrants.

Again and again, one is driven back to the fact that one needs effective frontier controls, and we must first persuade our partners of their importance to our country.

If we are taken to the European Court and the interpretation of the declaration is challenged, which would take two or three years or even longer, we must fight the case strongly——

Mr. Budgen: What happens if we lose?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend must be patient. I am coming to my third point.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend must also contain her natural impatience.

Mrs. Currie: I am supporting my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Baker: Then yes, I shall give way.

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend.

Does he agree that it is not only in the interest of this country that we ensure that there are proper controls over migration and immigration, especially into Europe from countries outside? It is also in the interests of other European countries, which face considerable problems because they have virtually no controls. Among the results are racialism and local unrest, with which they have no capacity to deal.

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is right and that brings me to my third point.

We must fight in the courts, but if we lose, my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench must make it clear to our partners that, at the next renegotiation in 1995-96, the first item must be the revision of article 8a. I am sure that most of my hon. Friends would agree that that issue will not come up until that time. If that renegotiation occurs then, I am absolutely clear that other European countries will realise that the line we are taking is the only effective one left.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said, the thing that is destabilising the Governments of European country after European country is migratory flows. One has seen what has happened in Italy, where north and south have almost been divided. That has left that country with no Government and no President. In German politics, the main issue is not the Bundesbank, the deutschmark, the German economy, or even the unification of west and east, but the fact that 1,000 refugees and illegal immigrants are entering Germany ever day.

Mr. Tredinnick *rose—*

Mr. John Greenway (Rydale) *rose—*

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North) *rose—*

Mr. Baker: I know that my hon. Friends want to intervene only to support what I am saying.

Mr. Tredinnick: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend. Does he agree that, if the controls were removed, it would inevitably damage race relations in Britain? If this matter went to court and we lost the case, does my right hon. Friend believe that the removal of border controls would be essential before any revision could take place?

Mr. Baker: No. In such a situation and time scale, we should continue to retain our border controls until the next renegotiation of the treaty came up.

Mr. Marlow *rose—*

Mr. Baker: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I will not give way, but I am sure that he will try to speak later.

The immigration controls that we have developed in the past 40 years have been difficult to secure. We have had to face immigration pressures quite different from those faced by other European countries. It has proved a great difficulty for all parties in the House, whether in government or in opposition, to agree to those controls. We have had to sustain them and we have done so in an intelligent and civilised way. Our immigration controls are among some of the most effective and fair in Europe and we should be proud of that. Those controls have certainly helped to harmonise race relations in Britain. That is why it is important that we should continue to enforce them. I was glad to note the clear commitment that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to that effect.

In my short speech, I have tried to flesh out the consequences of that commitment. I believe that three steps are necessary to ensure that we can continue to control our frontiers, because control of them is an essential element of the sovereignty of this country.

5.42 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who raised a number of interesting points, although I cannot agree with all of them. Those of us who believe that the long-term aspiration towards open borders in Europe to goods and to people is one to which we must cling will accept that the right hon. Gentleman has raised a number of issues that we must address. In particular, he drew attention to the balance that must inevitably be struck between external and internal controls. I accept that it is important to assess those controls in terms of their impact on race relations, about which many people involved in race relations are concerned.

I was rather more struck by the powerful speeches from the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). If the case against the Bill must be put, their speeches did so effectively. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North struck the nail on the head—he also helped to clarify my mind—when he identified the premise on which his argument and that of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney was built. He believes in the eternal utility of the concept of the nation state.

Frankly, I do not. I do not believe that the nation state is anything other than a relatively recent historical invention. I do not believe that it will always remain. *[Interruption.]* If such a notion were mentioned in any other European Assembly or Parliament, it would meet with ready understanding, and agreement. We are the most backward of European Parliaments when it comes to such understanding, and it is extraordinary that that notion is a matter for derision and laughter.

I believe that throughout this decade and next century the importance of the notion of the nation state will decline, although I do not argue that it will disappear. At the same time, advanced democracies will witness the rise in the importance of community and regional identity and supranational institutions. I do not see how we shall be able to cope with some of our emerging problems unless we are prepared to accept that our interdependence will lead to a greater dependency on international institutions. My party parts company with the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North on that basic principle, and that is why we have adopted different positions on the Bill.

Mr. Benn: Over the years, nation states have varied in their size and nature. The crucial question is democracy and whether the people of this country will be able to remove, through the ballot box, those who make the laws under which they are governed. The argument about the nation state is secondary, because under the present arrangements of the Maastricht treaty, that right goes.

Mr. Ashdown: The right hon. Gentleman has made a fair point. One of the deficiencies of the Maastricht treaty is that it does not address the democratic deficit in Europe.

Let me be blunt with right hon. and hon. Members. I do not believe in the sovereignty of this place—I believe in the sovereignty of the people. I believe that the people can vest their sovereignty in any place where it is of benefit to them to do so. Some can be vested in local government, some at Westminster and some in a form of government for Europe at Brussels. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is correct: wherever the people vest that sovereignty, it must be accountable. Such power must be subject to removal by the will of the people. The right hon. Gentleman is right that the Maastricht treaty fails to provide such democratic accountability for the European institutions it creates.

Despite that deficiency, we shall vote in favour of the Bill.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Ah!

Mr. Ashdown: That can come as a surprise to no one, including the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). We have held to our position consistently and

[Mr. Ashdown]

unitedly for more than 40 years—something that cannot be said of the Conservative party, and most certainly cannot be said of the Labour party.

We shall not vote for the Bill because we believe that the Maastricht treaty is perfect; it is not. We shall not vote in favour because we believe that Ministers have done a wonderful job in negotiating it; they did not. We shall not vote for the Bill because we believe that the Prime Minister has, true to his word, put Britain at the heart of Europe; he has not. We shall vote in favour because we believe that the Maastricht treaty is a step forward that must be taken. It would be a disaster for Britain and Europe were it not ratified.

I do not want to make too much of the Labour party's current position—I do not wish to intrude too much on private grief—but I find the Labour party amendment curious to say the least. It is clear from the amendment that the Opposition's objection to the Bill does not, as the Leader of the Opposition claims, just rest on the opt-outs. It rests on something much more fundamental. It now appears from the amendment that the Labour party disagrees on three counts, not just with the Bill but with the treaty. It has identified a lack of appropriate "convergence criteria", a lack of any mechanism to

"strengthen co-operation between the sovereign nations of the Community"

and a lack of anything

"to ensure the maximum of democratic accountability".

If the Labour party is to hold to that amendment, the logical consequence is that not only the Bill but the treaty is unacceptable to it. Although Labour Members will be able to get through tomorrow without betraying splits in the Labour party by abstaining, the logic of the amendment is that they must vote against Third Reading of the Bill, because the treaty is unamendable.

I merely say to my colleagues in the Labour party—*[Interruption.]* They are fellow members of the Opposition. In a broader sense, Tory Members are also my colleagues in this place. It is curious that a party which, only weeks ago, was telling us that it was the most pro-European party in Britain, ends up in a position where, to behave logically, it must vote against the Bill.

There seem to be two remaining positions of credibility in relation to what happens in the European Community: those who believe that the Community must now move forward, that Maastricht is not a finishing point but a transition: and those who will vote in favour of the Bill —every hon. Member on the Liberal Democrat Benches, some on the Conservative and some on the Labour Benches. And then there are those who believe that we have already gone too far and that the Community must now retrace its steps.

There was an element of that in the Prime Minister's speech today. Those Members will vote against the Bill, and will include some Conservative and some Labour Members, but the Government take the view that we should follow neither of those two cases and that the European Community should now move neither forward nor backward but should simply stay still. They regard the Maastricht treaty not as a point of transition but as a full stop. The Prime Minister used the words:

"thus far and no further."

That is not a position but an illusion. If the Community does not develop, it will start to unravel.

Serious problems are already building up within the various member states. The impetus that the development of Europe has received is beginning to be set back as nations deal with their internal problems. Already, their will is beginning to fail. One of the key tasks for the Government during their presidency will be to ensure that Europe has a clear direction forwards. If that does not happen it will begin to unravel. That will be welcomed by some Tory Members, and no doubt by the hon. Member for Newham, South and many of his hon. Friends. However, a retreating Community is not good—it is extremely dangerous. A Community that has lost the will to go forward has lost its capacity to play its part in the Europe that is now developing.

Mr. Spearing: In his opening remarks, the right hon. Gentleman correctly referred to the need for further international co-operation, which many Labour Members who do not like the treaty of Rome or its development would heartily endorse. He has now suggested that, due to developments, unless there is further change and centralisation, those arrangements will fall apart. Does he agree, therefore, that the basis of the present treaties is at fault but that we should now emphasise the international rather than supranational aspects of it, for which the right hon. Gentleman will vote tonight?

Mr. Ashdown: My answer to the hon. Gentleman is no.

If Europe does not progress forward, it will start to unravel. That would be dangerous at this point in history, because at the very moment when we shall need some sense of unity and cohesion in the west to balance a descent into confusion and rising nationalism in the east, Europe will be unable to provide it. At the very moment when we shall need to begin to integrate not only our markets but our industries in Europe, to compete against the Japanese and the economic growth of power in the Pacific basin, Europe will have lost the will and capacity to produce that integration.

When we shall need to face up to the environmental threat that confronts all of us, to co-ordinate more effectively to tackle it, Europe will have lost that capacity. At the very moment when we shall have to act together in a more united fashion to establish peace in the areas around our borders, even if that attempt is sometimes in vain, we shall have lost that capacity, too. At the very moment when we shall have to move toward the integration of our defence and security because their traditional foundation in NATO will be changing, we shall have lost the will and the ability to do so.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I agree with what the right hon. Gentleman has been saying, but why is the Liberal Democratic party—among all the Liberal parties in Europe—against the social chapter? Surely that means getting together and co-ordinating.

Mr. Ashdown: If the hon. Gentleman will be patient, I shall come to that in a moment. I shall develop my argument in my own terms.

When I hear the voices of some Tory and Labour Members—the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North is not one of them—I am often drawn to the conclusion that they seek to persuade us that all Europe's problems spring from the Community. Nothing could be further from the truth. The problems now facing Europe—those of the rise of the right, our economic problems and the

broader problems caused by disintegration—would exist whether or not the Community existed. The European Community and its growing integration have not caused those problems but are the instrument by which we can more effectively tackle them. If that is to happen, we must begin to deepen the integration of the Community and strengthen its institutions.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that the rise of the right is not a phenomenon of the European Community, but is it not a phenomenon of proportional representation?

Mr. Ashdown: Nowhere on earth is there a perfect electoral system. Every electoral system has its flaws and disadvantages. The hon. Gentleman may choose between an electoral system that allows one Member of Parliament to be elected from an extremist right-wing organisation when it has 6 per cent. of the vote—that is what proportional representation does—and allowing the Communist Government of Italy to have power, as it did throughout the 1960s in Italy, on 30 per cent. of the vote. That is what the electoral system of this country would have provided, had it existed in Italy. The hon. Gentleman may choose between the two systems.

I know where my choice lies. One system gives an extremist right-wing organisation, such as the National Front, one Member of Parliament at 6 per cent; the other could make that party the Government of the country at 36 per cent. Is that the kind of electoral system that the hon. Gentleman wants, because it is the system that he has here?

The Prime Minister said that he believed that we had to widen Europe. I agree with him and, if that is his aim, we shall support him. However, lying behind his comment was a different idea: that widening and deepening Europe were incompatible and that we could not do one and continue with the other. Many people, including me, believe that the Government's determination to concentrate on widening is deliberately being used to dodge the issues on deepening Europe.

If that is the Prime Minister's view—I suspect that it is—he must face up to three facts. First, he must face the fact that, if he wishes to enlarge and widen Europe, all those nations that now wish to join the Community wish to join not the looser Europe that he has described, but the Europe that is deepening and integrating its institutions. The European Free Trade Association, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia do not want the Europe that the Prime Minister and so many of his right hon. and hon. Friends describe: they want the Europe that they see being built around the Maastricht treaty—a Europe moving forward to closer and deeper integration.

The second fact that the Prime Minister must confront is that, if the Europe of which he speaks is enlarged, the present institutions will be incapable of providing the sort of guidance that such a Europe would need. God knows, they are incapable enough of providing the sort of central policy direction necessary for 12 member states; they would be incapable of providing it for 15 or 16—or even 22 or 23—member states.

If the Prime Minister wants Europe to be widened, does he want the institutions to be totally ineffective? According to the reply that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), it seems that the answer to that question is yes. My hon. Friend asked the Prime Minister whether there would be more co-ordination in foreign policy matters. The Prime Minister said that we could not take any decision unless it was to the advantage of us all. That is a recipe for paralysis and inaction. It would mean that, even with its present 12 member states, the Community could not take reasonable and co-ordinated steps. Therefore, with the 16 or 20 that the Prime Minister wants to create, it certainly could not.

The third factor that the Prime Minister must understand is that, if he wills the ends of a wider Europe, he must will the means of a wider Europe. There is no possibility that the sort of action that we would have to take to enable Poland and Hungary to join Europe could be taken through the Council of Ministers. The scale of such an operation is visible to us in the scale of the operation needed to unify Germany. The idea that we could achieve our goal simply on the basis of a horse trading forum like the Council of Ministers is inconceivable.

If the EFTA nations are to join the Community, how will we reform the common agricultural policy? Every one of the EFTA countries is a high subsidy agricultural nation. If they come into the CAP, they will merely join the horse trading forum, and will not help the thrust towards the reform of the CAP. Instead, they will be determined in their commitment to hold up its progress, as France now does.

If there is a drive towards the reform of the CAP, it comes not from the Council of Ministers but from the European Community. To the credit of the Government, that drive often has their support when no other Governments are willing to provide it. However, that does not always apply to this Government's Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. If we are to widen Europe, we must also deepen it; otherwise, the institutions will not cope and we shall not have the means to achieve the goals desired by the Prime Minister.

There are deficiencies in the treaty. We do not believe that the opt-out clause is necessary. Some Conservative Members are proud of it, but in order for us to believe that it is necessary for Britain, the Prime Minister will have to describe to us why. If he is to do that and to convince us, he can do so only if he can describe the circumstances in which it would be in Britain's interests to stay out of a monetary union that we had the ability to join. He has never been able to describe those circumstances. Until he can do so, the argument based on need falls and we see the opt-out for what it really is: nothing to do with Britain's interests, but more to do with splits in the Conservative party.

We all pay a high price for that piece of sticking plaster. We pay for it in that we shall not have the influence that we should have over the shape of the monetary union institutions. We pay for it in that our opportunity to have the European central bank located in Britain has been blown away. We also pay the price through uncertainty in the money markets as Britain does not know where it will be in three or four years' time. It could be inside or outside EMU. We also pay the price in that, should the pound come under pressure, we shall have higher interest rates.

The Labour amendment makes it clear that the party is unhappy with the criteria which Britain would have to meet if it were to join the European monetary union. It is unhappy with the entrance fee and wishes to renegotiate it. The positions of the two major parties are clear for all to see: the Labour party wants to join the club but will not

[Mr. Ashdown]

pay the entrance fee, while the Tory party will pay the entrance fee but is not certain that it wants to join the club. I am not surprised that the machinations of the House and the two main parties sometimes cause our European neighbours to look at us with despair.

The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) mentioned the social chapter, about which my concerns are well known and well articulated. I believe that some elements of the social chapter will lead us towards the recreation of the old corporate structure in Europe that we in Britain have got rid of during the past 12 to 15 years. I do not believe that it would be sensible for this country or for Europe.

However, I greatly regret that, by opting out of the social chapter, the Government are opting out of the capacity to shape the social institutions. They have many friends in this context—the Portuguese, the Irish and others would also wish to ensure that the application of the social chapter should be changed to make it more amenable to the views of their Governments. I do not understand why the British Government have deliberately denied themselves that opportunity.

The great deficiency of the Maastricht treaty is the democratic deficit. The institutions that we are building will not be accountable to the European Parliament or to those who elect Members of the European Parliament. That is an issue to which the treaty, the European Commission and the House will have to return. For the moment, the Liberal Democrats are prepared to support the treaty as it is a step towards what we should like to achieve, but it is not perfect.

The Prime Minister has recently told us that he is his own man—now he can be. He has his mandate—as far as our electoral system provides one—and can ignore the minority so-called Euro-sceptics among Conservative Back Benchers. He can also ignore his predecessor who is still writhing with the phantoms that haunted her during her premiership. Let him show us that he is his own man by marking a path forward and using the presidency that starts this July to give Europe a sense of direction forward. He must not allow it to stay still, certainly not allow it to go backwards. I believe that the Prime Minister understands the importance of Europe to Britain and the significance of an increasingly integrated Europe in the world.

If the Prime Minister succeeds in obtaining those goals, he will be giving Europe the sense of direction that it needs and acting in this country's best interests. In the next two or three months, we shall see what he does and whether he is his own man. If, during the progress of the Bill and the period of Britain's presidency, the Prime Minister's claim to be his own man is tested and proved to be correct, in the interests of this country and Europe, my hon. Friends will support him, tomorrow night, during the passage of the Bill, and in the months to come.

6.8 pm

Dame Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): I am very pleased to be able to participate in this debate with the freedom of a Back Bencher. I am even more delighted to be able to do so having heard the speeches that have been made. I should like to offer my congratulations, humble as they may be, to the Prime Minister on having so clearly set the scene for the introduction of this Bill to ratify the treaty of Maastricht.

I intend to approach the debate from the point of view of my constituents—a rather more simple approach than some of the hyperbole to which we have been treated this afternoon. In large measure I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who talked about the need to make haste with caution. I suspect that most of my constituents would agree with that. The reason for their caution is that they are uncertain what the future has in store.

Many of the people who work in my constituency are business men, who welcome the single European market with open arms. They want to participate in it, because they can see that that is where their future lies and that of their businesses, small and large. Their opportunities will be even greater, they believe, if, as the Prime Minister and I hope, we extend the European market beyond the Twelve to the countries of eastern Europe and to the EFTA countries that want to join.

I disagree with the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) about the reasons why European countries want to join the Community. It is not necessarily because they want a deeper Europe; it is because they want the benefits of the single market and of the level playing field within it. They see an advantage for themselves in trading in that market.

The Leader of the Opposition told us the reasons why he is so worried about the Government's desire to opt out of the social chapter. That reminded me, as I am sure it would have reminded my constituents, of the reasons why they were so cautious about supporting the Labour party in the recent general election. The people in my constituency are ordinary, average men and women, and they want to live and work as they choose. They want to enjoy the opportunities for employment which have been hard won over the past 13 years by getting rid of restrictive practices and rolling back the corporate state. All that has given them the chance to work and live as they would want to.

Women in particular want to keep the right to work part time and to work as they want. More women work in this country than in many other parts of Europe, and they treasure the opportunity to work. The money goes towards the family income, and we should not lightly discard this privilege in favour of the social chapter, which I fear would seriously threaten it.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) touched on an important point. It was clear during the course of the election that many people are worried about immigration—a sensitive area. My right hon. Friend was absolutely right to point out that, for 45 years, we have had a great deal of experience of how to absorb people from other nations, especially Commonwealth nations, and of how to integrate them.

When in government, I used to talk with considerable pride of an integrated multicultural society. We can impart a great deal of expertise to our European partners and teach them the benefits of living in a multicultural country. Our legislation and our institutions—the Commission for Racial Equality, for instance—could serve as models for other nations that will have people of other cultures coming to live among them.

This country is now composed of people of many different cultures, colours and religions, and I think that I

speak for my constituents in this matter. About 20 per cent. of them come from other cultures and have become part of this country, and I am sure that they share our view that it is essential that we keep our border controls as they are. They would be most concerned were they to learn that those controls were under threat. I share the anxiety of hon. Friends who have asked what will happen if the controls are discarded—if the Government cannot retain them. If the European Court ruled against us, what would become of our border controls? How satisfactory would it be to have to introduce identity cards?

I have no particular objection to identity cards. When I go shopping, I have to produce endless pieces of identification when I want to write a cheque, so I do not have a rooted objection to such cards; but I am absolutely sure that they are not a clear way of identifying those who enter and remain as illegal immigrants.

When I say these things, I speak on behalf of a large number of people outside this place—far from this wonderful enclosed forum where we debate among ourselves and sometimes fail to reach people on the Clapham omnibus. They have fears, and everyone who lives in this country believes that we are now close to the maximum number of people we can sustain in employment and underpin with our social security system.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the crucial issue is not whether identity cards are good or bad but whether we as a nation want them or have them forced upon us?

Dame Angela Rumbold: I quite agree. I would much prefer to have a choice. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley said, many people are seriously worried that the European Court of Justice will force us down a road that we do not wish to travel. Somehow or other, the Government must adopt the toughest possible line on these controls on behalf of the people of this country.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I raised this issue during the general election myself. Does my right hon. Friend accept that economic migration is a problem faced and worried about by every country in Europe for different reasons, and that it is a matter that we must deal with as the world's population doubles in the next 30 years?

Dame Angela Rumbold: I agree, as I suspect most thinking people would.

In this debate we may hear a lot of hyperbole and a great many high-flown ideals. Some Members may want to resist everything European and to say that we are self-sufficient. The truth is that we have not been self-sufficient for a very long time. For nearly 20 years, we have gradually worked more closely with our European colleagues, and we cannot resist the momentum now. We cannot sensibly resist the notion of closer intergovernmental co-operation in foreign affairs and defence. But I have great reservations about a single currency, as I suspect do some of my constituents. I should want to study it at much closer quarters before I came to a final and certain conclusion.

I am satisfied that we can go this far and that the Government will take us this far with the utmost expertise. What I worry about are the implications for the future, and I suspect that I and my colleagues will take great care to study in detail the various directives and issues as they come before the House, because we have the right and the duty to protect our constituents.

6.19 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The heart of the Maastricht treaty—the Bill is about the ratification of that treaty—lies in the proposals for economic and monetary union, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) so eloquently said. However, the Prime Minister hardly mentioned economic and monetary union. He dealt with the issues in the treaty which do not need internal or domestic legislation, but he did not deal with economic and monetary union—presumably because he felt that the opt-out from stage 3, which he managed to negotiate in Maastricht, meant that he did not have to deal with it. We heard much about subsidiarity, which is the latest Government fig leaf in respect of the train that is still proceeding rapidly towards a federal union, but we heard little about economic and monetary union.

I believe that, once we have completed stage 2, the reality will be that we shall have very little option but to sign up for stage 3. That is why it is important to debate economic and monetary union in the Second Reading debate. The economic and monetary union proposals in the treaty entail a massive, substantial shift of power over money and our fiscal and economic policy from democratically elected Government and Parliament to undemocratic Community institutions.

As has been mentioned, the spirit of the age in Europe, as elsewhere, is for more and better democracy and—to use a vogue word—deeper democracy, but the House is being asked to take a gigantic step back from more, better and deeper democracy, a step that is the very antithesis of the spirit of the age in Europe.

We are being asked to cement ourselves into a treaty on economic and monetary union, not a union of the peoples of Europe but a Europe of bankers and bureaucrats, a Europe shaped by that old Hegelian ideal of a universal class of expert civil servants whose loyalty and duties lie primarily with institutions. Of course, in their case, that means with the institutions in pre-war Germany—with those of the state—and in this case with the institutions of the Community, primarily those of the new central bank, of the Commission and of the European Court of Justice. Their loyalty and duties do not lie with the elected representatives of the peoples of the different nations within that union.

The cental bank will be able to control the supply of money, untrammelled by politics. The concept of price stability will be enshrined in fundamental legislation and, ultimately, the Commission will have the authority and power to pester, to bully and perhaps even to fine elected Governments who spend more on and borrow more for public services than is allowed under the arbitrary and ridiculous percentages enshrined in the treaty. Community institutions will have a virtual veto over the policies of elected Governments, and economics will be taken out of politics. I believe that the consequences will be enormous. They will be enormous for this House, for the democratic process throughout Europe, for the mainstream political parties in Europe and, especially, for the parties of the left, including my own.

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and other colleagues on the Front Bench have tabled a reasoned amendment, as it is described. It certainly expresses some misgivings about the treaty and, indeed, about economic and monetary union. However, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said—I took a careful note—that we, meaning the official Labour party, broadly supported the treaty. The implication of the reasoned amendment is that, broadly, we acquiesce in most of the treaty, and certainly in the part dealing with economic and monetary union.

Indeed, it seems that we are asking for the central bank to be in London. Why we are so keen to have it in London I do not know. I walk around the city from time to time—we have plenty of banks in London. Britain needs fewer banks and more production, so I cannot understand the desire to have another bank. Perhaps some of my right hon. Friends will have more lunches at these highly geared and responsible banks. I am sorry that my right hon. Friends have decided that the Labour party should not vote officially against the Bill, and, in effect, against the proposals for economic and monetary union.

My fear is that by acquiescing, we shall have to acquiesce in many of the domestic economic consequences of the treaty and in its proposals for economic and monetary union. I shall mention a few of those consequences. First, I do not know what the Treasury is plotting, but if the Bill becomes law, I should not be surprised if we had a new Bank of England Act in the next year or two, because it will be necessary——

Mr. Cash: Next year.

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman says, "Next year." It will be necessary to repeal the old Bank of England Act 1946, which was an attempt by a post-war Labour Government to impose direction and control on the Bank of England following the bank's activity—or lack of it—in the 1930s and the dreadful unemployment that we suffered, partly as a consequence of what the bank failed to do, or what it did.

In effect, the new Bank of England Act will transfer power and control over monetary policy to Mr. Robin Leigh-Pemberton, his heirs and successors. They will be responsible not—as they are now—to the Chancellor of the Exchequer but to the president or the governor of the European central bank. In acquiescing in the treaty, I presume that the Labour party will be acquiescing in privatisation or to the handing of monetary power from the Government to the Bank of England and, through the Bank of England, to the European central bank.

Secondly, let us consider public expenditure. We have been told that entrenched in the treaty is a condition that the borrowing requirement—the public sector borrowing requirement as we call it—should be 3 per cent. of a country's gross domestic product. At the moment, it is about 4·5 per cent. in the United Kingdom. Last night, in his speech to the Confederation of British Industry, the Chancellor said that attempts would now be made to bring the PSBR down to 3 per cent. of GDP—I am sure that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is already sharpening his knife. Cuts will have to be made even if there is considerable growth in GDP in the next few years. There will have to be cuts in public expenditure to get the PSBR down to 3 per cent. as demanded by the treaty agreed at Maastricht.

Again, my fear is that if we—the Labour party—fail to vote against the Bill, we may very well be seen to be acquiescing in those cuts in public expenditure to bring PSBR down to 3 per cent. I do not believe that most of my colleagues would want that but, intellectually, it will be impossible to oppose those cuts from the Back Benches or the Front Benches when we have acquiesced and not objected to Second Reading.

Thirdly, "price stability" is a phrase lifted from the Bundesbank Acts which were passed when the western part of Germany was the Federal Republic. There is nothing wrong with it for that reason, but price stability means zero inflation. I see that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury nods in agreement. Indeed, it is something that the Chancellor of the Exchequer said last night.

The vague phrases that we have heard about unemployment are all subject to the main objective of the European central bank, which is price stability and, in turn, zero inflation. With low growth in Europe, I do not believe that it will be possible to achieve zero inflation without having higher and higher unemployment. That is the only way that we shall be able to achieve zero inflation in the Europe of today. The central bank, however, will press inexorably for the goal of zero inflation. As it does so, unemployment in Europe—already exacerbated by low growth and immigration—will increase.

Is the Labour party, by not opposing the Bill's Second Reading, saying that it now accepts price stability as the main goal of economic policy in Europe? The Labour party has never accepted that before. We are against inflation, but we have always felt—Conservative Members may disagree with this—that there are trade-offs. Fashions come and go in economics but we, the Labour party, have always felt that there is a trade off between zero inflation or inflation and unemployment. Are we accepting price stability by not voting against Second Reading? Right-wing monetarists have long advocated the concept of price stability, but are we accepting that it should be entrenched in the United Kingdom's economic constitution?

A further consequence for the Labour party—I apologise to Conservative Members for discussing these matters in these terms, but these are important considerations for a party of the left—will be difficulty in preparing a manifesto for the next general election. Having accepted all the canons of economic policy that are set out in the treaty, I do not know how we will be able to set out an alternative and distinctive economic policy. They are the canons that have been promulgated by the right wing of the Conservative party and even by the Keynesians on the Government Benches. I think that a few Keynesians are left.

These canons have been accepted by the Friedmanites on the Government Benches. Are we, the Labour party, to accept them? By failing to oppose the Bill, we are sending a signal that we as a party of the left in Britain, with the other parties of the left in Europe, accept the concept of strict monetarism that in the past we have always deprecated.

I have spoken in many of the debates on Europe over the past 20 years, and they are characterised by much wishful thinking. It goes like this: "It will all fall apart anyway. It is not going to happen. It will be all right on the

night." A variation on that goes as follows: "These words in the treaty are awful. The language is terrible. It is easier if you are a lawyer. These French and German people are very academic. When men of good will and practical common sense get together, the words will not mean anything. We can then work it out between us."

Even Margaret Thatcher, the former Prime Minister, was taken in. I read in a newspaper the other day that somebody promised her that the Single European Act would not affect sovereignty. She did not have to read the small print, because the reality was to be seen in large print.

There was some more wishful thinking from the Prime Minister this afternoon, and subsidiarity was part of it. It is used as a cloak to prevent people questioning too deeply the movement away from parliamentary sovereignty. Apparently we are now back at the heart of Europe, Germany is now in permanent decline, things are terrible on the Continent and the general election in this country has been won by the Conservative party. We shall have the presidency of the European Council of Ministers for the next six months. We can invite all the Ministers to Holyrood house and give them dinner with the Queen, and they will admire the tiara. Everything will be fine. The Foreign Office will be happy. We are back at the heart of Europe and the other Europeans will follow us and do what we want.

That is the "big Englander" argument. It is advanced on the basis that we know better than they do and they will now recognise that. My experience tells me that it ain't going to happen like that. It has not happened like that in the past. The European Court of Justice, for example, may decide that we can no longer have our border controls. The right hon. Members for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) will not be able to do anything about that. If the House of Lords makes a judicial decision and we believe that it should be overturned, we can do so by means of a vote, but it is not possible for us to overturn a judgment of the European Court of Justice. Probably the 12 member states could do so, but it would be a herculean task to get them together, quite apart from getting them to agree. My experience tells me that in the end the central bank will enforce its status.

Sir Russell Johnston: The right hon. Gentleman is going on about wishful thinking, which I believe is accompanied by a certain amount of self-delusion. He attacks Conservative Members on the ground that Europe is full of Friedmanites. Those on the other side of the argument mount an attack on the ground that Europe is full of people producing social charters. There is something in the middle which is much more sensible despite what the right hon. Gentleman said about men of good sense not being able to carry the day.

Mr. Davies: Perhaps I am a simple Welsh lawyer, but I read the words in the treaty. Those words are reasonably clear. The European Court will enforce its status, the central bank will try to achieve price stability, the court will enforce the treaty and the Commission will rely on its powers. That is what has happened until now and that is what will happen in future.

There is no hiding place which offers escape from the main clauses of the treaty. My party's reasoned amendment provides no escape and no hiding place.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): My right hon. Friend has made some play of the trade-off between zero inflation or price stability and unemployment. I am sure that he has read the reasoned amendment, but I shall draw his attention to it. Part of it reads:

"deeply regrets the Government's failure to make any attempt to build into the Maastricht Treaty convergent criteria which emphasise the need for balanced development, a high level of employment and sustainable growth in the regions and countries of the Community".

Does that not meet my right hon. Friend's concern?

Mr. Davies: I certainly agree with what my hon. Friend read out. That part of the reasoned amendment seems to provide a good reason to vote against the Bill's Second Reading. I intended to make that point in my conclusion.

We in the Labour party have always prided ourselves on being a party of democratic socialism. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and I came into the House in 1970, and I know that he has always honourably maintained that tradition and spoken for it. I have read the treaty, and there is nothing democratic in the part that relates to economic and monetary union. There is nothing socialist about it, either. That is why I cannot understand why we should not vote against it.

6.38 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The speech of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) was interesting. He is one of the more perceptive Opposition commentators on economic affairs. His remarks showed that it is beginning to dawn on those within the Labour party that the stance of its Front Bench spokesmen, with their cavalier acceptance of the full implications of stage 3 of monetary union and their outright rejection of the far more cautious and prudent stance of my right hon. Friends, is a dangerous one.

I was especially glad this afternoon to hear the view of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that the Maastricht treaty, as presented to the House and embodied in the Bill, will reverse the centralisation and the centralising tendencies that are to be found in the Community. That is the most important task of all for democratic leaders and democratic assemblies, given that, like it or not, we live in a world of enormous centralising tendencies. It is surely the duty of us all not merely stubbornly and negatively to resist, but to create a balance between the great centrifugal forces at work in modern technology, modern business, modern bureaucracy and modern international institutions, and the decentralising tendencies that democrats must believe in and fight to retain.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister would be the first to recognise that if that is the aim and the intention as we go into this post-Maastricht phase, there is still a great deal of work to be done both here and in the other capitals of the existing member states. It appears that the mood is turning in those capitals. The fears of those who feel that we shall be caught up in the same snags and snares as we were with the Single European Act are less well founded now than they were then.

I understand those fears, but the mood is changing. The sort of debates that we have in this country are being repeated in other countries, which is welcome. We can play a part in stimulating those debates. We should not simply sit and feebly say, "The Eleven are against us, it is hopeless and nothing can be done." A great deal has been done and

[Mr. David Howell]

can be done if we show intellectual vigour. Indeed, that process began at the Maastricht meeting in December when my right hon. Friends showed that they were not inevitably caught up in the steamroller process. They came back with the opt-out from the social chapter and the protocol on monetary union.

A great deal of the attack by the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon, which was made with much feeling, was simply tilting at a gigantic windmill. The Conservative party is not against sensitive and well-tuned social and employment legislation. We have a proud record on those matters and we have been very successful over the years. However, we are against the idea that they should be laid down in a remote place and not in this nation, in the appropriate way that we choose to make our laws and design our legislation.

The Opposition amendment fails to understand even the beginnings of what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister explained we were seeking to do in the post-Maastricht phase, which is to make a reality of the undeniably vague word "subsidiarity", about which there has been so much talk. I believe that the word comes from canon law, although some tell me that it comes from the military law of the second Roman empire. Either way, it is the beginning of a process in which we shall conduct our law making and lay down the rules and regulations for governing the order of our lives in a way that is diverse and which differs from country to country. Only in certain cases will the central Community authority be regarded as subsidiary and competent to deal with those matters.

Provided that we work with vigour on the definition of "subsidiarity"—the *Oxford English Dictionary* refers to a central authority having a subsidiary function—it in fact means that the centre is subordinate. The Community should not be seen as above the House of Commons or the nation state; the centre is the body to which we delegate certain functions that could be better achieved at Community level. Therefore, I welcome, vague though it is, the beginnings of a different direction towards the sort of Europe that provides a balance between the nation state and nationhood—a Europe of nations in a modern sense, not the old Gaullist sense—and the necessary central functions that we delegate to the Community and its offices. They are not the higher authority, but the authority to which we delegate certain acts, as we choose.

In the coming weeks and months, we shall discuss the details of the Bill and the Maastricht treaty, and the way in which that reforms the Rome treaty. Tonight is a time of principles, and the one that I believe should be strongly upheld is the principle embodied in the word "diversity". Of course, diversity means the very opposite of convergence—the word that we hear so often and which is in the Labour party's amendment. "Convergence" is a fashionable word, most especially in relation to monetary union aims, but also in relation to a whole range of other matters in the Single European Act and the Maastricht treaty. The more we think about convergence, the more inappropriate and worrying it becomes, so it is significant that that principle is embodied in the Opposition amendment.

Convergence means central aims to flatten the disparities and remove the discrepancies between the nation states. We must question whether that is even a practical idea, let alone a healthy ideological one. What do we make of the convergence in Germany, which is supposed to be the lead country in commitment to monetary union? The Germans are trying to achieve convergence between the former east and west Germanies, but it is an utter failure. The more they try to achieve common labour laws, common minimum wages and even a common currency on a one for one basis—against the shrewd advice of Karl Otto Pöhl—the more they plunge into hideous disparities.

The very attempt to create convergence simply results in even more disparities, so that they have now created not just a welfare state—I am not necessarily against that—but a growing dependency with bottomless expenditure, with bottomless demands on the west German taxpayers and on the borrowers of Europe, at our expense, all in the name of trying to create an unnecessarily precise convergence between east and west.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that that all becomes even more worrying when we remember that Spain is supposed to have the same gross domestic product per capita as the former east German state? Therefore, if it costs DM 150 million a year to subsidise the former East Germany and bring it up to the standards of the former West Germany, what will it cost the Community in subsidy or increased taxation to do the same for Spain?

Mr. Howells: I was about to deal with the broader questions raised by my specific example, and my hon. Friend has touched on one of them. I was about to mention Italy and question how convergence is working out there. The poor Italians hardly even have a Government at the moment——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: That is a great advantage.

Mr. Howell: My hon. and learned Friend has a shrewdness that he brings to us from the northern kingdom.

Italy has a budget deficit of 127,000 billion lire. Perhaps that figure is too large to fit into *Hansard*. The very idea that Italy will even begin to formulate a policy to bring about the convergence necessary to overcome the disparities and prepare the way for stage 3 of monetary union is pure fantasy. The truth is that convergence is applied as a doctrine—the sort of doctrine that the Labour party apparently wants and which is embedded in the attempt to move towards the third stage of monetary union. I do not want to sound cavalier, but I do not think that that first stage will ever happen. Convergence is unattainable and undesirable.

If there is to be a thriving single market, we need more diversity. Trade and competition thrive through differences, not through the flattening of differences—between level lakes no water flows.

The constant theme of many parts of the Maastricht treaty and of the Europe-builders of the past few years has been that we must do away with diversity and achieve a commonality, a similar pattern, a uniformity of taxes and social regulation as embodied in the social chapter, employment law, schooling, culture and so on. That does not promote competition; it is anti-competitive and needs to be challenged at every point. It is the larger Europe, on which I hope that my right hon. Friends will concentrate during our presidency, that will have the necessary

strength. Looseness is strength; the rigidity and flattening of the disparities is the real weakness which will lead to Europe breaking apart.

I am not talking simply about convergence, to use the jargon as applied to monetary union. The same theme occurs in the former Single European Act and is still there, I am afraid, in the present revised treaty where it appears in the new jargon as cohesion, Cohesion receives a big boost in the new treaty in article 130b. It also appears in a new commitment to educational and vocational policy and in the European social fund and the European structural fund. In all those areas there is a vast commitment to flattening and removing disparities.

When people talk about momentum in the EC, they do not mean what they used to mean when we first joined the Community, which was a momentum towards the market and towards removing barriers and obstacles; they mean momentum towards more central recycling of funds, more vast transfers of resources and more commitment by the central administration to the gigantic merry-go-round of redistribution. That is a dangerous course.

The idea that one first denies the poorer areas of Europe the opportunity to compete on costs, to move their exchange rates and to operate their fiscal policies in ways which would attract private investment, and then compensates by redistributing funds on a vast scale is socialism at its silliest. I do not believe that that is what my right hon. Friends want to see emerge after Maastricht, and they are right to seek to check it in every conceivable way.

The doctrines of convergence and cohesion have been promoted at every point. Even the sacred level playing field, an idea which has been carried to extreme forms by market-minded officials who have gone well over the top in seeking to flatten and level everything in sight, leads to a pattern which is far from promoting competition and the single market. Those doctrines are founded on the economic fallacy that, through redistribution, one can compensate for the patterns of similarity which have been imposed on everyone.

That is not the European greater single market that we want to see. Contrary to what has been said, it will not be welcomed by the new east European democracies, the Finns, Swedes or even the Austrians. They want the great prosperity of a single market, as do we all, but that will be destroyed and defeated by the huge merry-go-round of redistribution. That did not work at a national level, as was shown in Britain in the 1980s and in many other countries—there was an absurd idea that we could compensate through socialisation—and it will not work at the European level. We should use the opportunity of the Maastricht agreement secured by my right hon. Friend to ensure that the passion for sameness is blocked by the policy-makers of Europe during the next few years and that we go in a different direction.

We must take this opportunity to establish new priorities and to establish principles on which an open and enlarged Community can work. We must use this opportunity to obtain a constitutional settlement on where the competencies lie and to establish a balance between Community and national rules and get away from the feeling that everything is sliding to the centre, which is what will happen unless politicians are perceptive and fight hard.

Above all, we must equip this Parliament to achieve that balance. That means not merely scrutinising current legislation and regulations, as is done so ably by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and his Committee, but giving this Parliament a far more effective pre-legislative role so that we can reverse the centralisation and maintain the balance of a healthy democratic Community.

6.54 pm

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): First, I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. I remember a long while ago returning from exile to Pontefract and the first meeting of an education committee under your chairmanship. It is nice to be back with your fairness and firmness once again. *[Interruption.]* We people from Pontefract must stick together.

We seem to be living in some "Alice in Wonderland" world when we talk about sovereignty where words mean what each person says they mean rather than what they actually mean. What is this wondrous sovereignty that we are losing? I understand sovereignty to be the ability of people to control their own lives; to be able to control the large corporations, the things in the larger world but also the things at their level.

What is so unique about Westminster and Whitehall that all sovereignty resides there, which is what I have been given to understand by speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House today? That is the clearest nonsense. The sovereignty of this House, as far as I have seen in the relatively short time that I have been here, does not mean the control of the Government; it means listening to what the Government say and then trooping through the Lobbies in the way that the Whips direct. That is scarcely sovereignty.

We have the worst examination and scrutiny—I am pleased to be able to say this in front of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) because it is not his fault—of European legislation of all 12 member countries. We should consider what happens in Denmark which truly takes control of the Council of Ministers and truly knows what its Ministers will be saying. In Denmark, the subject of prawn-flavoured crisps would have been debated before it became an issue—unlike here, where we blame the loss of our prawn-flavoured crisps on the loss of sovereignty.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman seems to be completely unaware that, in addition to the Scrutiny Committee chaired by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), there are two European Standing Committees. I do not think that he is a member of either of those, but he could join us and spend many hours debating the issues long before they reach the stage that he describes.

Mr. Enright: I should be delighted to accept the hon. Lady's invitation. I was not allowed to join either of those Committees even though I put my name down as soon as I was elected. I am glad to have the hon. Lady as an ally in my quest to become a member of those Committees. But it is not the Committees that are at fault. I do not blame the Committees. I blame those who set up the Committees with their terms of reference and the way in which they are circumvented.

Mr. Spearing: One of the features of the new scrutiny system on which my hon. Friend comments is that he will be able to attend all the Standing Committees when they

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are set up, even if he is not a voting member, and he will be able to speak at all of them, along with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). Is my hon. Friend aware that our system, although it could be improved, is the best of all systems in that it reports on each item of legislation from the Council of Ministers, the Government provide an explanatory memorandum and if the Scrutiny Committee requests a debate, there is one? I know of no national Parliament within the Community that covers the matter in that way.

Mr. Enright: The Danish Parliament does precisely that, and in an infinitely more effective way. A whole range of legislation has passed through the House, including the Single European Act. Many of the provisions about which Conservative Members complain were implied by that legislation. They accepted and voted for it, and it is too late for them to complain.

Sovereignty is the getting of proper control. National Parliaments need to control the Council of Ministers, and we ought to give much more power to the European Parliament—which the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) will, I understand, soon be joining—in order that it can properly scrutinise the Commission. That is the double whammy—the way in which we ought to control the Community.

The Community has all kinds of imperfections. I would not dream of saying that it is a perfect institution. However, one must be positive about one's objectives. If all that one wants out of the Community is money, money, money and for it to serve just as an exchange and mart, the Community will crumble and fold. There is no chance of that happening, however, because—contrary to the remarks of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) the Community's 11 other member states will sustain it.

It is interesting to study the attitude of the European Parliament in that respect. As soon as Conservative Members of the European Parliament joined the Christian Democrats, the liberals there said, "You're even more right-wing than we are, so why don't you move seats?" The extreme right of the Conservative party is viewed precisely as such by many Christian Democrat parties, because they do not share the hang-ups that Conservative MEPs have about trade unions.

The social chapter is important because it will make Europe a Europe of the citizen—not a Europe just of the big bankers. Europe is for every individual citizen. It should be accessible to the individual through us and through Members of the European Parliament. Economics is the handmaiden of society, not an end in itself. Economics is a tool to ensure—and this is enshrined not in the Single European Act or Maastricht treaty but in the treaty of Rome, and in the European Coal and Steel Community—the quality of life of workers and of consumers. If the social chapter is removed, we shall be finished.

Mr. Dykes: The hon. Gentleman does not need to criticise the banks. Last year's report from the Deutschebank includes a four-page section espousing the virtues of the social charter measures.

Mr. Enright: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. The House will understand why I proposed him as president of the European Movement.

One aspect of the treaty has not been mentioned. It is disgraceful that the Prime Minister's speech made no reference to the Committee of the Regions, which will be a real test for the Government. They talk about subsidiarity, and that committee is an important part of subsidiarity.

Our present structure is not very helpful in gaining for our regions the recognition that is enjoyed by, for example, German lander. If the committee of the regions is to be appointed by the Government and not be proportionally elected locally, there will be real problems. Germany has done well out of regional and social funds because its lander have direct access to both the Commission and European Parliament. They established substantial structures for that purpose and, even more importantly, to convey developments to their local industries.

Dr. Godman: The Committee of the Regions is purely an advisory body, and it has no power vis-a-vis Europe's central institutions. According to the Prime Minister this afternoon, his interpretation of subsidiarity confines the allocation of competencies to central institutions. There is no question of the present Prime Minister devolving power to Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland or the English regions.

Mr. Enright: I accept entirely my hon. Friend's argument, but I do not downgrade the importance of being able to offer advice, which is also the ability of the regions to accrue knowledge—and that is a powerful tool. Regions can inform their Members of Parliament what is happening.

A practical example of that is RECHAR, which was an attempt by the European Community to ensure that those made redundant from the coal industry would be compensated. Restructuring left a legacy of dereliction, environmental blight and unemployment. I invite Conservative Members to Hemsworth, to visit the pit villages with me and to see the enormous problems that restructuring created there.

There have been big arguments between the Government and the European Commission about the way in which the RECHAR money should be used. At no time were local authorities properly consulted by the Government—although it is interesting that they were consulted by that awful body the European Commission, as well as by the European Parliament. The one body that did not talk to local authorities was the Department of Trade and Industry.

The former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) announced on 17 February that all the additionality problems had been resolved. Local government, local bodies and private industry look forward to the resolution of those problems and to the money arriving.

In Upton in my constituency, there is a huge complex of pit baths, which a local entrepreneur—not the local authority, but with its agreement—wants to restore, so that they can be used as work units for small and medium-sized enterprises. That is one of the Commission's other pet themes, but it was not mentioned by the Government. However, we still do not know how the RECHAR money and cover is to be provided.

Part of our sovereignty in Parliament is the ability to scrutinise and to put down questions. I asked the President of the Board of Trade

"how the capital cover arrangements for RECHAR operational programmes are to be introduced."

I tabled that as a priority question, because it is a matter of priority in my constituency. The first response that I received stated that the Department would reply shortly. I received its full reply this morning:

"My Department expects to make an announcement shortly."—[*Official Report*, 19 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. *105*.]

Is that the kind of nonsense that we can expect when European money is being thrown about? If we had a regional committee, it would be harrying the Government every moment, and it would not be left to one or two Labour Members to do that. Regional committees would serve a useful purpose, although not if they were appointed in the same way as area health authorities.

A good deal of nonsense has been talked about monetary union. We talk as though we could advance an economic policy in isolation, here in the United Kingdom —assuming that there is a United Kingdom—that would solve all our problems, rather than being ruled by these nasty foreign bankers. Under successive Chancellors of both shades of political opinion, however, what has happened abroad is what has affected the price of the pound—and, as a result, affected our economic policies and the level of employment.

We could issue pleas. In the very old days, we could say to the United States of America, "Please do not do this to us." Before we were members of the European Community, we could say, "We are going to join the Americans, and the strength of the dollar will help us." Now we have a decision to make: do we have a currency that can stand up to the yen and the dollar or do we have an offshore currency that will end up being policed in the way in which we are told that immigration points should be policed? That would be nonsense. As a result of coming together and pooling our sovereignties, we shall gain infinitely more sovereignty over the pound and economic policy than we have at present.

Successive Chancellors in the present Administration have talked about the way in which they are shadowing the mark, and discussions have taken place in Germany with the famed independent central bank. I have not known that bank to be so very independent of the policy pursued by West Germany. Far from it: what the Government have said, the bank has followed. We certainly could not boast such an arrangement in this country. Is the Bank of England as an entity subservient or subject to the Government? I certainly have not noticed its being subservient or subject to Labour Governments, and from time to time it has taken action that has proved awkward even for Conservative Chancellors.

I cannot see that, under the present system, our Bank is anything other than independent—and, in practical terms, the Bundesbank has been less independent than the Bank of England. The Bundesbank made it patently clear what it thought about union between the East German mark and the West German mark: it was against it. It may well have been right; I am not arguing about the rights and wrongs of the matter.

Chancellor Kohl said, "We will join together," and they did join together. There was no nonsense; it was a shotgun marriage, with the gun pointed at the head of the bank. That is precisely what will ultimately happen to us when there is a central bank in the European Community. The Opposition amendment is sensible, because it says that we must openly put in ECOFIN and develop its powers so that we can be absolutely sure that we are running in parallel. We are talking not about taking separate paths, but about taking the same path to combat unemployment. The only way in which we can combat that dreadful problem is by working with our European partners and strengthening our manufacturing industry. We can do that together, but we cannot do it separately.

In no way will that do what the right hon. Member for Guildford seemed to suggest that it would do. It will not produce a sameness throughout the Community. A huge variety exists. If the right hon. Gentleman attends the European Parliament more regularly, he will see that it is the minorities that are defended by it—minorities that are often ignored in their own countries, in much the same way as we seem to be ignoring Scottish, Welsh and, even more important, Yorkshire culture because of our insistence on centralisation. That insistence is unhealthy and dictatorial. We need a Europe that is open; a Europe that is together; a Europe that can and should improve the world in many ways.

7.14 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Personally, I have always believed in the European Community. I voted for the referendum and I voted for the Single European Act. I did so on the basis that the Community is an effective means of achieving co-operation and increasing free trade, not only within Europe but in the world as a whole—the contracting global village that we inhabit.

My opposition to the Bill and to the treaty is based on the fact that, under the proposals, we are moving into wholly different territory. The Bill is about the future government and democracy of Europe and of the United Kingdom. The gravitational pull in the treaty—which is endorsed by the Bill—would take us, indeed, drag us, into a federal Europe. If anyone cares to use the expression "a unitary state", I do not really mind. The key question is not related to the theology of federalism, or the term "unitary state"; it is the question of what functions are being allocated, where the power will lie, who will be accountable to whom, who will be elected by whom and how the representative functions will be distributed. That applies not only to Government, but to the people as a whole.

I have a further problem with the proposals. Contrary to what some people believe, this is very much a centralising measure. I will go further, and say that I have proof: I put it as high as that. Strictly speaking, we are not debating the common provisions—title I of the treaty—because they are excluded from the Bill, which deals with the prerogative question. Those provisions, however, contain a clear statement that we shall now be operating within a "single institutional framework". Article C states:

"The Union shall be served"—

there are no ifs or buts—

"by a single institutional framework which shall ensure the consistency and the continuity of the activities carried out in order to attain its objectives while respecting and building upon the 'acquis communautaire'."

I think that I can more less rest my case.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Hear, hear.

Mr. Cash: I am glad to hear the Minister say that.

[Mr. Cash]

We are being told that this is not a centralising measure, but it is clear from the common provisions—which are part of the treaty, and on which we must therefore rely—that a single institutional framework is involved.

Moreover, as far as I can judge, no reasons are being given for what is being done. I have never found any reason for us to be put in our present position, although I have heard a great deal about the fact that we will not have such a position imposed on us. I spoke about that in a debate in the previous Parliament. The question, surely, is not whether the position is being imposed on us, but whether we are prepared to agree to it.

Back in the days of the last Prime Minister, I asked repeatedly for a White Paper. During the Conservative party leadership campaign, the Foreign Secretary suggested that a White Paper might be a good idea, and he may have gone further; but we have seen no White Paper. We have had no referendum, and we are to have no free vote.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman has said that his pre-eminent objection to the proposal is that it is a centralising proposal. If that is so important to him, why does the reasoned amendment to which he has attached his name emphasise his opposition to both the principle of subsidiarity and the creation of a Committee of the Regions?

Mr. Cash: I am delighted to hear from my hon. Friend. I call him that in this context, because we have discussed the issue many times. I shall come to the question of subsidiarity in a moment.

The problem is that the common provisions prescribe a union. I do not think that much attention has been paid to that yet. It is all set out. It absolutely amazes me when those of us who have been looking at these documents find that things which have been skulking around in obscure parts of the House of Commons Library for some time are only now just becoming obvious.

We are being taken into a union. I remember the debate that took place on about 25 June of last year. It was said then that the high contracting parties would establish themselves into a Union and impose duties upon the citizens of that union. Apart from obtaining certain rights, duties would be imposed upon them.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): My hon. Friend paints an eloquent picture of the dangers that he thinks we now face in going into a certain type of Europe that he never contemplated. Presumably he is distressed by that, because he voted to go into Europe; he voted for the single European market; and he voted for the exchange rate mechanism, and the rest. Would not the logic of his own eloquence today be to say, "I was conned," or, "I now realise the error of my ways"? Ought he not now to say that he wants to found a movement for coming out of Europe? If he were to do that, he might find that many of us would want to join him. If he does not say that, he lays himself open to the accusation that he is talking about a world that that he would like to be in, not about the world he is in.

Mr. Cash: In all fairness, that is a very good point. The Single European Act did not do what many people claimed it did. The difficulties that have emerged from the Single European Act have arisen largely because of the mischievous way in which the European Commission has used the provisions of, for example, article 100A in order to bring things within the ambit of what the Commission would like to be included. The health and safety provisions in relation to the working time directive are a good example.

It is the misuse of the powers of that Act rather than the Act itself which has caused difficulties. The Single European Act was based upon co-operation. The reality is that the European Commission has misused those powers. We are therefore perfectly entitled to stand by what we have done. Certainly I do so with regard to my support for the Single European Act.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: If it was possible for misuse of the previous Act to have been made against our interests, why should we not use the present Act in our interests?

Mr. Cash: We shall be using the provisions of this Act to assist ourselves, provided that it does not take us, as I believe it does, into this ever deeper and more centralised European union. The main point is that we are being told—my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) made this point—that subsequently we shall be able to move towards a system of decentralisation. The problem is that the contents of the treaty and the Bill have the effect of centralising this system. We shall find it increasingly difficult afterwards to decentralise. My answer, therefore, is that we should reject the treaty now, precisely because this is the opportunity to do so, and that we should not wait until afterwards. This is the moment.

Mr. Butterfill: Before my hon. Friend leaves the question of article 100A, does he not accept that the so-called misuse of the Single European Act, or of article 100A, makes a difference only because, if we use it for health and safety, we come under qualified majority voting, whereas otherwise it has to be unanimous voting? That is the only difference. The problem with the Single European Act that my hon. Friend identifies remains the same. The difference is that, under the treaties that we are now considering, the principle of subsidiarity is introduced and the Commission has the obligation to apply it.

Mr. Cash: I believe that the principle of subsidiarity is a con trick. It is said that there will be a devolution downwards of functions. Yes, that will happen. However, the critical fact is that the main functions will be transferred upwards. One has only to look at the main provisions of the treaty that are taken to the upper tier—economic and monetary union and matters of that kind—to realise that that is where the real power would lie. Apart from the fact that many distinguished jurists have repeatedly rubbished the concept of subsidiarity, including Counsel to the then Speaker, the fact remains that this is a concept which, in my judgment, is centralising rather than decentralising, yet we are being told the opposite. It is extremely difficult for me to accept that.

As for economic and monetary union, I believe that, by the end of the second stage, we shall be so locked into the system that is being provided—the cranking together of the machinery of the various banks, civil services and Treasuries of the member states—that to all intents and purposes it will be unrealistic to turn round when we reach 31 December 1996 and say, "We're going to dispense with

all this; we're going to turn the clock back." I just do not believe that that will happen, and I am not sure that very many other people do, either.

As for our own protocol, there are the difficulties that I have already described. The general economic protocol declares, first, that we shall not use the veto to prevent any other member state from going ahead and, secondly, that we shall be tying ourselves into an irreversible, irrevocable commitment to economic and monetary union. That seems to me an incredible state of affairs. I entirely accept the valiant efforts that were made to get ourselves an opt-out, but I am afraid that ultimately it will not work. The general economic protocol locks us in very significantly.

The setting up of a central bank raises the question of accountability and democracy. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that there is an effective opt-out for ourselves. However, the gravitational pull of the treaty is towards a central bank and all that goes with it. I have to say unequivocally that it is crystal clear from the statutes of the central bank that the bankers will be unelected and unaccountable. They cannot guarantee price stability. If they fail to produce it, nobody can get rid of them. Opposition Members have repeatedly stated—for their own reasons, which are not necessarily the same as ours —that they are deeply worried about the impact that a central bank would have upon our parliamentary democracy. They are absolutely right.

The one lesson that I have learnt from the speeches that I have heard so far and from my previous observations on the point is that the Bundesbank does not have the degree of independence that is attributed to it. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford pointed out, Karl Otto Pöhl pleaded and remonstrated with Chancellor Kohl not to go down the one-for-one route, but he did it. Look at what happened, never mind all the instability that that could create for Europe.

The reality is that these independent, unelected bankers are to be given the surrogate power of government in Europe. That is absolutely and totally unacceptable. On that principle alone, we ought to reject the Bill.

7.29 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Tomorrow night I shall vote against the Bill. I cannot vote for the Opposition amendment which, if it makes any sense to me, argues that we should go further towards European union and the central bank. This is not a debate between those who are anti-Europe and those who are pro-Europe. I very much resent the terms "Euro-sceptic" and "Euro-enthusiast", which were invented by the media and by some of my colleagues to blank out the serious debate about two important questions on which there is a wide and legitimate difference of opinion: first, about how Britain should be governed in the next 10 years and, secondly, about how Europe should be governed. If we could just get it into our minds that there are legitimate alternative opinions, the debate will at least be rational.

Some of my hon. Friends favour a fully democratic, federal, united states of Europe. I happen to think that it would be a bit unwieldy, but it would not fall under any criticism on the ground that it was undemocratic. One thing that would happen, of course, is that the Commission would be abolished, because the Commission has been elected by nobody. Jacques Delors struts across the European stage, very often supported by the Liberal party, with no democratic credentials whatever. They talk about proportional representation in Britain, but not about electing Jacques Delors by any principles at all. Yet they endorse him.

I understand that point of view, but I do not share it. There is the Maastricht view that we should go thus far but no further. The Opposition are wildly enthusiastic—the Front Benchers, at any rate—to go further into Europe. There is a view, which I hold and which has come out very interestingly in the debate, that if we want a durable Europe we must proceed more slowly, by consent between member states, not because we are nationalists but because we are democrats. That is the argument that I want to put forward.

I now refer to the much-neglected question of how Britain is governed. If we are in this new stage, it will have a profound effect on how we are governed. My experience may be a little rusty, but perhaps I may tell the House what happened in the five years when I was on the Council of Ministers and in my six months as President of the Council of Energy Ministers in 1977. A secret Cabinet Committee —we are told that the membership of such committees is to be published and it will be interesting to know whether this one is—in which the Foreign Office played a leading part would decide—*[Interruption.]* The reason why the Foreign Office likes the Common Market is that it runs every Department now, because every Department has to go through the Foreign Office to get anything done.

The secret Cabinet Committee met, and the Minister —whoever it was who was going off to Brussels—was given a brief as to what law he was to agree to. When he went to Brussels, the royal prerogative was invoked and the matter was done. Civil servants used to ask, "Why bother with a Bill in the House of Commons when we could get the measure through the treaty machinery in Brussels?"

Many measures, such as the harmonising of gas appliances, were passed. That was quite harmless; I am not in favour of a variety of different gas appliances. However, in the old days we would have an Act of Parliament, but Brussels is a quick way of doing it. Of course, when we get to Brussels, there is the Committee of Permanent Representatives—COREPER, that mysterious animal composed of permanent officials. Sir Humphrey Applebys of every country in Europe have got together, and they say, "You cannot do that, Minister, because we have agreed with the Dutch that if they do that, the Belgians will not object to what the Italians have said to the people in Luxembourg." The Minister has no power, anyway, *[Interruption.]*

I am an archivist of my European experience, too. I have kept all the papers. I looked at them over the weekend. The matter is worth studying. We can hardly imagine anybody more important than the President of the Council of Ministers, which is the job that I had. In that capacity I was not allowed to put in a paper. I could say yes or not to what the Commission wanted. We were a collective monarchy who could say, "La Reyne le veult," or, "La Reyne s'avisera," as they say when Royal Assent is given, or not given, but we could not put in an alternative. That is a fundamentally undemocratic structure.

I am not a nationalist—I would not follow Mrs. Thatcher anywhere on this matter. She abolished the Greater London council and various other bodies, so I do

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not even accept her credentials as a democrat. The right to dismiss the people who make the laws under which we are governed is what democracy is all about. We are being told that sovereignty does not exist. Of course it does not exist. Nobody is sovereign. The Americans are not sovereign, because they can be destroyed by a missile from China, for all I know. Democracy is about whether we have the right to respond to a situation over which we have no control. When we go into the Community, we lose the right to respond because the laws are not made by people here.

I have never forgotten an incident between two brothers —alas, both dead—Sam Silkin and John Silkin. John was the Agriculture Minister and Sam the Attorney-General. It was Sam's unhappy duty to tell John that his pigmeat regime was illegal. I sat in the Cabinet Office listening to those brothers, one explaining to the other that, although we had a parliamentary majority and had passed a measure, it was illegal.

Later, two Commissioners were chasing me about a scheme introduced by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) when he was Secretary of State for regional development or something. The Commissioners said to me, "What you are doing is illegal —it is helping the Scottish industry to produce equipment for North sea oil rigs." I said, "I am sorry: you introduce a scheme in Europe—we do not want a special one." They took me to court as Secretary of State. They chose polling day 1979, when I was busy, and after that the matter disappeared.

We have misled the British people about the meaning of the Community from the point of view of our own Parliament. The House is now governed by the royal prerogative for the first time since 1649. Over the centuries, Parliament has grabbed back prerogatives from the Crown —even that one on the security services, inadequate as it was—and put matters in statute. Now any Minister can use the prerogative to encompass and control Parliament. That is a fact. Hon. Members may argue in favour of it if they like, but they should not call it an extension of democracy or merging sovereignty—no doubt Saddam Hussein thought that he was merging his sovereignty with Kuwait when he went in, and so on. It reduces the House of Commons to a municipal body which can be rate-capped and fined.

When I joined the Labour party, I hoped that my leaders had greater aspirations than to be the municipal leaders of the Great Britain corporation, which, for all I know, could subsequently be wound up by the Commission or by the Community in its new form of union. Nothing in the world would persuade me to go along with that. If I did, I would be stealing the powers of the people who sent me here.

Even if I agreed with every bit of it, I cannot give away the powers of Chesterfield, which have been lent me for five years, the right to make laws, subject to my being removed. I do not have the right to do that—nobody has the right to do that. Any hon. Member who gives away powers from his constituents will betray their trust. That is my conviction. It applies whether one is Conservative, Labour or anything else, because, under the democratic structure, one can use the power to have monetarism, socialism, liberalism or whatever, but now the people will lose the right to make that choice.

I understand the arguments for European integration. I have heard them many times: capital is internationalised; we can have guaranteed economic growth; the ecu will stabilise our currencies; the central bank will prevent inflation; Britain cannot stand alone; integration will guarantee peace in Europe; we have an ancient culture; a federal Europe will be a world power; European influence will modernise Britain; Britain is not very democratic anyway—that is true; there is no alternative—a phrase that Mrs. Thatcher invented. Those are the arguments and I understand them. I have heard them so often.

The plain truth is that Europe has changed fundamentally since the Common Market was set up. Then it was the cold war Europe—the Europe which was trying to get capitalism on its feet again in case the Russians came in and overthrew it. It is a wholly different Europe now. It is not even the Europe of growth that was promised by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup when he took us in. Entry into the Common Market was to be good for Britain, good for Europe and good for everyone—I think that that was Harold Wilson's phrase.

The position has changed in the sense that the eastern economies have collapsed. Western Europe has not given us growth. We now face a slump. In these circumstances, a slump reinvents and encourages the nationalism, racism and xenophobia that I fear. I am against the rush into a federal system because I fear the very thing that it will allegedly overcome. Integration has to be achieved slowly. Unity does not guarantee currency stability. America is a powerful country with a common currency, but the dollar goes up and down according to events. There is no guarantee that the ecu will be stable. We have to accommodate a much wider range of traditions than is even the case in the United States.

I fear that when the British people discover that they cannot change laws and policies by voting, either they will not vote at all or they will riot. I made a speech at the election of the Speaker in which I said that I feared a time of social unrest. Some hon. Members expressed their disagreement. But historically, riot is a traditional method not only here but in every country that has not had democracy. When experts say that they understand the institutions of Europe, I wonder how many people study with equal care the incredibly delicate relationship that we have with the people we represent.

If there is discontent, every one of us says, "Do not riot —vote." When we can no longer say that, we shall have licensed riot. I do not say that to stimulate riot. Riot is the most unconstructive way of achieving change. The Strangeways riot probably produced more prison reform than we have seen from any progressive Home Secretary. But riot is not the way to do it. That is what this place is about. It is not about the Crown, the mace, or the Speaker's silk stockings. It is about somehow maintaining in a society of different ingredients an agreement to be governed by people who only have a narrow majority. Lose that and we have lost everything. I am genuinely afraid of it.

I am in favour of a commonwealth of Europe. I should like to see a Europe that is wider and which harmonises. It should have a Council of Ministers which discusses co-operation, rather as the Prime Minister said today would happen for areas outside the treaty. I should like to see an assembly that met and worked out conventions to which member states could adhere. I should like to see a

human rights commission that would examine people such as the Turks, who are banging at the door of the Community and have a rotten, dictatorial regime. I should like to see all of that.

The ultimate consent must come stage by stage and step by step from member states within the framework of their understanding of how fast they can go. That is why the decision to deny a referendum is an outrage. I was alone in urging a referendum in 1970. I was in a minority of one in both the shadow Cabinet and the national executive of the Labour party. I had the satisfaction of seeing it come through later. We held a referendum. It was right that people should be consulted. It is absolutely wrong that a step of the magnitude of that proposed in the Bill should be taken without consulting the people who will lose their power through the Bill. It is utterly immoral.

That my party's Front Bench team should be against a referendum is not only immoral but inexplicable. After all, we argued for the referendum, carried it through, put it on the statute book and voted in it in 1975. These are big questions. I hope that in Committee a referendum can be inserted in the Bill. I hope that we shall be able to make progress with a new Europe, because this continent of ours has enormous potential.

We have had two world wars. Everyone in Britain lost people in them. I lost an uncle in the first world war and a brother and friends in the second world war. Everyone wants a peaceful Europe. But the House should not think that enforced centralisation produces peace. Look at Bosnia-Herzegovina, at Slovenia and Croatia. One cannot run capitalism from Brussels in the way that people tried to run communism from Moscow. It has to be done by agreement at almost every stage. Otherwise, the thing breaks down.

I urge the House to listen to the view that I put forward and to bear it in mind tomorrow. It is not hostile to the European enterprise. I have a deep belief that we must go forward on a different basis. The Government have said that some co-operation will be outside the treaty. That is a gain. Perhaps they should draw the real conclusion that co-operation inside the treaty should also be on an intergovernmental basis. If that were the case, we might make a lot more progress.

7.45 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): What a fascinating speech we have heard from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). However, I must admit that it smacked more of Jeremiah than of the idealism which he would like us to believe that it was. In the context of his speech, we should remind ourselves, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reminded us at the beginning of his speech, that, uniquely in Europe, there has been a healthy debate in Britain about the way forward in and for Europe. It took place before the treaty of Maastricht and after it, and it continues to take place now.

The Government are not steamrollering the treaty through in any greater sense than any of the previous steps into Europe or the decision to stay in Europe were steamrollered through. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister deserves our praise for that. The British form of parliamentary democracy has been enhanced by it. Unlike the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, I believe that the British stance on Maastricht has been sensible, open and extremely cautious. That is exactly the stance which he encouraged us to take.

As the Prime Minister said this afternoon, Britain is fully committed to stages 1 and 2 of economic and monetary union. But, aware that there are risks of the unknown in planning the currency union in stage 3, the Government believe that we shall be in a better position to weigh the pros and cons of a single currency, and the economic consequences of convergence by member states, when that becomes a real option in the mid-1990s, or whenever.

So Britain insisted on a special protocol to delay a decision on stage 3 and to decide later whether to participate. We shall be able to see then whether there must be political union for monetary union to work. I believe that political union is unlikely. We can also decide at that stage whether to join a single currency, which also seems rather unlikely.

Certainly, the architects of economic and monetary union saw no economic imperative for political union. The Maastricht agreement reflects that. We must not be frightened or put off by the hypothetical, imaginary, fantasy bogeymen conjured up by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). Contrary to the view of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), but as my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said, the prospect of implementation of stage 3 seems to be receding. That point was also made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker).

Contrary to what my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and the hon. Member for Chesterfield claimed, nothing in the Maastricht treaty means that we have denied or should deny the forces of nationalism or individualism. That is what really worries my constituents in Lewes and I am sure that it is one of the things that worry the right hon. Gentleman's constituents in Chesterfield. In Sussex, we have the saying, "We shall not be druv." That underlines many of the right hon. Gentleman's arguments.

The power of a nation or the people in it to harness the human spirit and to encourage endeavour is undoubted, considerable and valuable, and that has underpinned many of the speeches this afternoon. No lasting union could ever be built on a desire to submerge individual and national characteristics or identity. That is extremely important, and nothing in the Maastricht treaty threatens it.

The provisions of the Maastricht treaty relating to intergovernmental co-operation in foreign and security policy do not form part of Community law and are not part of the Bill, as the Foreign Secretary has frequently pointed out, and the Prime Minister reminded us today.

It is worth considering that the Maastricht treaty leaves the way open for the Western European Union, in consultation with NATO, to develop European Community defence and security co-operation. Only recently, our Secretary of State for Defence and his German counterpart emphasised the complementarity of the role of NATO and the increased activity of the WEU. In that context, WEU activity should be guided by two fundamental principles—openness in consultation and complementarity in decision making.

There are questions about how the WEU will develop, especially after its enlargement through the membership of

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Spain and Portugal, and its involvement in the Gulf war. Of particular importance is the question of the accession to the WEU of Denmark, Greece and Ireland—the remaining members of the European Community—and the linked question of observer status and associate membership of European NATO for Iceland, Norway and Turkey, which are not in the WEU. Those questions concern the scope and the instruments of the WEU's future operational role.

What has been clearly established is that there is no contradiction between European integration in security and the strengthening of solidarity between NATO partners. Closer co-operation between the parliamentary assembly of the WEU, the European Parliament and the North Atlantic Council should ensure that.

At a time of shrinking defence budgets and continuing —some would say growing—uncertainties in the eastern countries of our continent and the countries to their east, Europe must now develop so that it can better pool its defence resources and use them more efficiently. Maastricht provides direction for Europeans to move ahead and create the military apparatus that will be responsive to risks from all quarters in Europe as well as those from beyond our continent.

The Government were correct in the Queen's Speech, and in the Prime Minister's words, to reiterate the importance of the WEU and to recommit Britain to it as the pillar of European security.

I digress from the narrow confines of this short Bill briefly to touch on the continuing importance of security in Europe, because it has not yet been mentioned. I also digress because the agreement signed at Maastricht established that the European Community can develop in more ways than one, without the European Commission having a monopoly of initiatives. Our House of Commons will continue to exercise its own scrutiny of those matters. What is not included in the Bill can be just as important as what has been included, and that is another reason why the motion and the treaty deserve ratification.

7.54 pm

Mr. Greg Pope (Hyndburn): As this is my first speech in the House, I am sure that you will bear with me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I refer to my predecessor and to my constituency before turning to the main item for debate.

On my way to the Chamber, I reflected that I would not be here if it had not been for the backing that I have received from my family. I was fortunate enough to have been brought up in a politically active family, but that has a down side. During my first week here, when I did not know any of the rules—I now know a few—I left the Chamber without bowing to Madam Speaker. I was pulled up not by a Whip or by a senior colleague, but by my mother, who saw it on television and telephoned me to tell me off. I have not yet learnt to be in awe of the Whips Office, but when a mother tells you off, you do as you are told.

It is a great shame that my father is not alive to be here, as I am sure that he would have been proud. It is a special thing to represent one's home town in this place, and I am proud to do so. My father had to leave my home town of Great Harwood in 1933. When he was 15, he lied about his age to run away from home and join the King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery because there were no jobs in the town. In some ways it is ironic, but I am sure that he would have been proud that, nearly 60 years on, his only son is representing the town in Parliament.

Since the constituency's inception, Hyndburn has been represented by Ken Hargreaves. It is no overstatement to say that he has devoted his life to representing the people of the area, first on the old Oswaldtwistle urban district council, later on Hyndburn borough council, where he became mayor, and from 1983 to 1992 as the Member of Parliament. He won respect from both sides of the House for putting the views of his constituents before those of his party Whips. I accept that that may not be a recipe for promotion in Parliament, but it is a recipe for winning respect for integrity, and that is something that he has in abundance.

Ken Hargreaves said in his maiden speech in 1983 that he would rather have beaten any member of the Labour party than Arthur Davidson. I echo that by saying that I should have liked to beat any member of the Conservative party but Ken Hargreaves, who was a thoroughly decent man.

Hyndburn did not exist as a parliamentary constituency before 1983. Before then, it was partly made up of the Accrington seat, which was ably represented by Arthur Davidson for 17 years. I know that he is fondly remembered in Accrington. He came up during the general election to help with my campaign, and I notice that many more people wanted to shake his hand than mine. If I can represent the area half as well as he did, I shall not go far wrong.

The other part of what is now Hyndburn, Great Harwood, was represented before 1983 by Lord David Waddington. In the 1987 general election, I stood against David Waddington in Ribble Valley. Members with marginal seats will give me some sympathy when I say that I was unfortunate to lose by a narrow 22,000 votes. In mitigation, it was raining on polling day in 1987, and everyone knows how difficult it is to get the Labour vote out in the rain. I should be grateful that there was sunshine in Accrington on 9 April this year.

Hyndburn is better known for its main town of Accrington and for Accrington Stanley football team, which I am sure I shall welcome back to the Football League in the not too distant future. Hyndburn has an unfair public image, something of a "Coronation Street" image, of mills and terraced streets, which exists, although, sadly, most of the mills are now idle.

To be fair, Hyndburn borough council has done its best to change that image and to promote the town, but the council could do more if it was given the resources to do so. More than half the houses in my constituency either are unfit for human habitation or require serious renovation. I hope that the Government will bear that in mind when determining the next round of housing investment programme allocations.

The Accrington Victoria hospital was built not by the Government but by public subscription. The people of Hyndburn, and of Accrington in particular, feel very strongly that the Government have no moral right to close ward after ward, as they have done in the past 13 years. It is now rumoured that the maternity unit is threatened with closure. Any such proposal would meet with strenuous opposition, not just from me, which is neither here nor there, but from people from all sides of the community and of all political parties.

I noticed that the Prime Minister said that what was most important about the Bill was not what was in it, but what has been left out. That is absolutely true. My constituents were dismayed by the Government's decision at Maastricht to opt out of the social chapter. A survey earlier this year in my constituency showed that between 5,000 and 6,000 people in employment earned less than £3·40 an hour. Those people cannot understand why the Government appeared to betray their interests at Maastricht.

The economic options open to the Government are stark. We either undercut our competitors and become the Taiwan or the South Korea of Europe, or we compete on the basis of quality. We can be a low-paid, low-skill economy or a high-paid, high-skill economy. When will the Government learn that exploitation damages not only our economy but the fabric of our society, whereas decent pay and conditions benefit the economy and society?

My constituency is home to a famous brick company. Anyone who has been to a party conference in Blackpool will know that most of that town is constructed from Accrington brick. That company manages not just to compete with the Germans, but to beat them in their own market. It is able to export successfully because it has invested not only in technology but in its work force, who are properly paid and properly trained.

We have heard quite a bit about subsidiarity within the Community and the United Kingdom. The Government could show their commitment to subsidiarity by assuring the House that our representatives to the EC Committee of the Regions will be elected members of local authorities from those very regions rather than mere appointees of central Government.

In the time that I have been in the House, I have noted the gloating, perhaps understandably, of Conservative Members at winning a fourth election in a row. May I issue a word of caution? The electorate of the country, and certainly of my constituency, did not give the Conservatives a mandate for every dot and comma of their manifesto. The social chapter is one example of matters on which the people have not given the Conservatives a mandate. I hope that they will bear that in mind and will listen to that majority.

8.3 pm

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): I am not sure what the normal form is when one maiden succeeds another, but I should like, metaphorically, to blow kisses across the Chamber and congratulate the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope) on his excellent maiden speech. He set a high standard and I was particularly impressed at the generous tribute that he paid to his predecessor and the fluent and moving way in which he delivered his speech.

I should like to begin in the same vein by paying tribute to my predecessor, Sir David Price. He served in this House for 37 years and he was one of the few Members of the previous Parliament who had also fought in the second world war. He brought to this job the soldier's quality of bravery when he spoke out independently on certain issues. He also brought to that job the soldier's quality of loyalty to one's colleagues when he put his own interests second to those of others.

Sir David took a particular interest in the health service and the disabled. In the constituency he was not only respected, but loved—a number of people in the House who knew him have also expressed similar sentiments. The best pledge and boast that I can make to my constituents is that I shall be pleased if I do this job half as well as Sir David.

My second duty is to tell the House that I am fortunate enough to represent one of the most excellent seats in the country. Eastleigh has a famous history. It was at our airport that the Spitfire was developed, which helped to defend the country in the second world war. More recently, the Vosper Thornycroft yard at Woolston built the glass fibre minehunters that played a crucial role in saving British and allied lives during the Gulf conflict.

Eastleigh developed as a railway town at the turn of the century. In the past 15 years, it has become a boom town —thousands of new jobs have been created, tens of thousands of new houses have been built, new schools have been opened and new churches consecrated. We even have a new railway station at Hedge End. If hon. Members want to see the booming Britain of tomorrow, to which we can all look forward, they should come and visit us in Eastleigh.

Eastleigh is not only an economically thriving area; it is a strong community with a strong sense of responsibility for those who are less well off. We can be particularly proud of our network of voluntary services—we have the best dial-a-ride scheme for the elderly in Hampshire. Eastleigh is a strong, caring community.

Eastleigh is a world leader in another respect—speed of milk bottle delivery. Hon. Members may be aware that Eastleigh was the home of the late Benny Hill and that that is where he began his milk round before he became a comedian. Hon. Members may remember his song about Ernie, the fastest milkman in the west. I am glad to tell the House that Ernie is still alive and still working, but, after 40 years as a milkman, he has, unfortunately, moved on to another job. But it is clear that high productivity levels are still much in strong evidence in Eastleigh.

While we are on the subject of dairy products, I should like to apologise to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for the fact that he was hit by an egg when he was kind enough to visit the constituency.

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): That was not the first time.

Mr. Milligan: No, indeed. However, I was able to reassure my right hon. Friend that that egg was not thrown by one of my constituents, although there are 93,000 of them. The person who threw it was from far afield. The true feelings of my constituents towards my right hon. Friend were shown on 9 April when they gave a massive vote for the Conservatives.

I am proud to be pro-European; I make no apology for that. But now I should like to turn to the treaty we are discussing tonight. I believe that the European Community has been one of the great success stories of recent times. I have spent much of my journalistic life in eastern and western Europe writing about European events. I am still an enthusiast for Europe and I have found some of the comment in this debate depressing because it was essentially negative and it misunderstood Britain's role in the present world.

I had the good fortune to work for the BBC and to report the revolutions in eastern Europe. If hon. Members had seen the faces of the young people of Prague, Budapest, Warsaw and Berlin as those revolutions took

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place and if they had had the opportunity to talk to them, they would have discovered that they have not only a great passion for freedom and democracy, but a great desire to join western Europe and the Community, our Community. Those events served as a reminder that, even today, the Community has the power to move hearts as well as road haulage quotas.

Eastleigh is enthusiastic for the Community, for practical reasons. We are developing an airport that will create 5,000 jobs and develop links across Europe. We have hundreds of businesses that export to Europe, especially through the port of Southampton, which is now doing a booming trade with Europe. We are twinned with two railway towns in France and Germany and have close relationships with them. Our sixth form college at Barton Peveril is, for the first time, welcoming East German students.

However, enthusiasm for Europe does not mean support for every idiocy suggested by Jacques Delors. May I give two precise examples from my constituency? My constituents cannot understand why the European Commission has taken it upon itself to try to block the completion of the M3 motorway at Twyford down. For 30 years my constituents have suffered intolerable delays because of the failure to complete that motorway and many people have been killed and injured on the Winchester bypass because of that delay. Not only can my constituents not understand why there is a delay, but they cannot understand why an Italian Commissioner should tell the British Government where to build a British motorway.

The second example in my constituency is that we are fortunate enough to be home to Mr. Kipling's bakery, which bakes "exceedingly good cakes". Many of the bakery staff work long hours and a double night shift. They do so not because they like the smell of mince pies but because they want to earn good money for themselves and their families. Yet, under the Commission's proposals, the social chapter and the social charter, the idea would be to deprive those workers of the right to work those hours. They cannot understand why Europe should want to restrict their right to earn good money.

Hon. Members will therefore understand that my enthusiasm for Europe is tempered by scepticism about some of the nonsense that is now coming out of Brussels. That is why I heartily welcome the treaty. It seems to combine positive developments in Europe, the extension of the efficacy of the Court of Justice, a more effective foreign policy and important steps toward economic and monetary union, which are in the interests of my constituents, together with a change of direction in the institutional structure of Europe.

The treaty develops a new model for Europe, which is different from that which Jean Monnet drew up 40 years ago. There will be more supranationalism in one or two areas, but the main move is towards a new intergovernmental structure, particularly on the sensitive issues of immigration and foreign policy. The decision to opt out of the social chapter is not only right but sets a useful precedent for negotiations with the new countries that will come in from eastern Europe. They will be unable to stick to all the same rules as the countries in the existing Community. If we are to enlarge Europe, it is important to make it a multi-track Europe. Obviously, all countries will have to stick to certain common principles, but individual countries will want to opt out in many cases if the rules prove too difficult for them to accept.

The treaty was possible only because of the remarkable relationship that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has developed with Chancellor Kohl and the German Government. He has done that through his qualities of courtesy and plain speaking, which have made him so popular in this country, and in Germany. Because of that relationship, the Germans were willing to moderate many of their demands, which the House would have found unacceptable. The fact that we now have the best relationship between Bonn and London for many years augurs well for this country and the future of the Community. That is why I have every enthusiasm in supporting the treaty, which is good for Eastleigh, good for Britain and good for Europe.

8.13 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): I commence by congratulating the hon. Members for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) and for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope) on the delivery of their maiden speeches. The speech of the hon. Member for Hyndburn was marked by the tribute that he paid to his predecessor. It is good when an hon. Member speaks highly of a predecessor from another party. The hon. Member for Eastleigh spoke without a note, which was a magnificent performance for a maiden speech. It made a big impact on me.

The hon. Gentleman said that he was in Prague, Budapest and eastern Europe, where I have been over the years. But the fact that the inhabitants of those countries wanted to be part of Europe did not necessarily mean that they looked forward to being in the European Community. There is a difference. They wanted freedom and democracy, not necessarily the European Community.

We are now taking part in a debate on the unmentionable subject of the general election campaign. The Conservative and Labour parties entered into a conspiracy not to raise the issue of Europe during the election campaign. That is why it came as a surprise to me this evening to hear the Prime Minister say that he had gained a mandate for Maastricht by winning the general election on 9 April. A Government do not have a mandate for a subject when they fail to mention it during an election campaign.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said that he resented the fact that he has a reputation for being anti-European simply because he questioned some of the issues raised by the Maastricht agreement and the European Community. I share that resentment. I have been actively involved in European politics since my university times more than 30 years ago. I joined the European youth campaign and have been involved in European organisations across Europe in the past 30 years, including 10 in the European Parliament. I take a great joy in the development of democracy and freedom right across western Europe, spreading into eastern Europe. I therefore resent any suggestion that, because one questions the Maastricht agreement, one is anti-Europe.

The Ulster Unionist party can look the other parties straight in the eyes and say that we have been consistent in our policy on Europe. I listened with amazement to Conservative Back Benchers complaining today about the

problems now arising on border controls, immigration issues and the 48-hour working week. Those problems arise not from the Maastricht agreement but from the Single European Act, for which the very same Conservative Members voted. I am glad to say that the Ulster Unionist party voted against it and, on behalf of the party, I was one of the few Members of the European Parliament who voted against it in Strasbourg. There is only one Labour Front-Bench Member present now. We approach the subject with a clear conscience, but Labour Members' consciences cannot be clear because in the past few years they have jumped around so much on their policy on Europe.

We must congratulate the Prime Minister, however, on the way in which he negotiated the Maastricht agreement. There is no doubt that the Government proved themselves good and skilful negotiators. They have managed to negotiate a treaty that will result in a victory tomorrow night for the Government. It is a true opt-out, although some of us would say that it was a cop-out because the Government are avoiding the real issue and postponing it for another day.

Last week I had the privilege to return to the European Parliament. It was an important week—asparagus week. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am surrounded by some other Members of the European Parliament. One of them spoke earlier this afternoon and six former Members of the European Parliament fled Europe to come here. They may have heard that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) was trying to get there. Not only was it asparagus week, but there were two other important events, one of which was especially important for me—our first Northern Ireland exhibition in the European Parliament, which went successfully and was opened by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. In addition, we had the visit of Her Majesty the Queen, which has not yet been mentioned in this debate.

The Queen's visit to the European Parliament was magnificent. The way in which she performed, from the moment of her arrival to her departure, made one proud to be British. On the morning of her arrival, I looked at the English newspapers and was horrified by the squabbling and scaremongering that appeared to be taking place. I looked forward to the Queen's speech with trepidation, but having listened carefully to every word of it, I found myself in full agreement with the text. I know from my friends in the Christian Democrat party and other groups that all nations felt great respect for the United Kingdom following Her Majesty's speech to the European Parliament.

When we talk about the United Kingdom in Europe and, to use the Prime Minister's phrase, "the heart of Europe", we must ask ourselves what sort of Europe we are discussing. Is it the Europe of the present common market of the European Community? Is it the Europe of the Maastricht agreement? Above all, is it the Europe of nation states or a Europe of regions? That issue has not been clearly defined by the Government, who are hedging their bets.

This afternoon the Prime Minister said that he interpreted the Maastricht treaty as a transfer of matters back to the nations. Not one of the other 11 Prime Ministers in the European Community would interpret that agreement in that way. Having been involved on the continent of Europe for 15 years, I can assure the House that the projection is towards federalism and a united states of Europe. To pretend otherwise is to mislead the people of the United Kingdom.

We need a wider Europe and we certainly need greater co-operation in Europe. We also need more nations in the European Community. An Ulster Unionist has many Roman Catholic friends in the European Parliament and works happily with them. Many of them say that they look forward to the introduction of a greater Protestant work ethic in Europe as a result of the entry of Sweden, Finland, Switzerland and perhaps even Norway. We want those countries to join the European Community, but, above all, we want less centralisation in Europe, with less bureaucratic control from Brussels.

When we talk about the Maastricht agreement, we are debating a treaty for European union. There seems to be, particularly among Conservative Members, a pretence that we are not talking about European union. There is an avoidance of the fact that we are talking about federalism. Some people pretend the word does not exist or, if it does, that it can be interpreted in different ways, but in Europe federalism is being interpreted in only one way.

The treaty for union makes reference to votes for all citizens of the European Community in whatever nation they live. So far, the vote is restricted to local and European elections, but next it will be extended to apply to our national elections—everything in the European Community goes step by step, not all at once. That development is creating problems for some countries. In the next European elections in Luxembourg at least one of their six Members of the European Parliament will be Portuguese, not Luxembourgers as already about 20 per cent. of the population of Luxembourg and thus, under the new legislation, 20 per cent. of the voters, will be Portuguese. Such problems are being created for small countries and regions in the European Community.

We in the Ulster Unionist party certainly welcome the reference to the committee of the regions. I would be the first to agree that Northern Ireland, More than any other part of the United Kingdom, has benefited from the European regional development fund. We give thanks for the work of both Labour and Conservative Governments when in office for the way in which they assisted us in Northern Ireland to take advantage of the ERDF.

However, it is tremendously important that the people of the regions which benefit from the fund know how it operates and participate in the decision-making institutions. Therefore, we welcome the idea of a committee of regions and trust that Northern Ireland will be fairly represented on it by the people of Northern Ireland and not politicians sent over to rule Northern Ireland.

The treaty refers to the cohesion fund, which was to apply in those states which had less than 90 per cent. of the average gross domestic product in the European Community. Unfortunately, Northern Ireland was excluded from the benefits of that cohesion fund for some reason. I hope that if our exclusion was an oversight—I suspect that it was, as we were one of the districts to benefit from the European regional aid and so should have been included in the fund—we will gain compensation by being granted further assistance from the ERDF.

The main issue in the treaty is that of monetary and economic union, and the suggestion of a single currency. What does a single currency require? It requires a central bank to control it, which means the surrender of national freedom to vary either interest rates or exchange rates. It

[Mr. John D. Taylor]

even means that we would give up the right to decide the major economic policies to benefit United Kingdom citizens.

The Labour party, Liberal Democrat party, Conservative party, Ulster Unionist party and all other political parties will cease to have a right to introduce different economic policies, as we shall be governed by factors outside the United Kingdom and outside our democratic control. That is the key issue facing this Parliament and the citizens of the United Kingdom. That is why we want a referendum on the Maastricht agreement in the United Kingdom before a decision is taken. I know that some Conservative Members, some Liberal Democrats and some Labour Members support that idea, which, regrettably, has been rejected by the Prime Minister.

If we fail to secure a referendum this time, I hope that there will be one before a final decision is made in two or three years' time on whether to join the European central bank with a common currency and all that goes with that. If we enter a central European economic system, it will ultimately be controlled by a central European institution outside our control.

The Government's policy has been too clever by half. The policy has been determined in order to hold the support of most Conservative Back Benchers and also, I fear, to deceive our Community allies in the other 11 countries who now significantly misunderstand the United Kingdom's attitude to the European Community.

By enacting the Bill, Parliament will be running away from the issues, as happened in the recent general election. The day of reckoning will simply have been postponed —but that merely means that the day will be more painful when it finally arrives in three years' time.

8.29 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I hope to follow the remarks of the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor), but first I should like to congratulate most warmly the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope) on his maiden speech. He spoke most graciously of his predecessor, of whom we were all fond, and he was listened to with great interest and enormous respect. I cannot promise him that he will always be treated with such respect; that will depend on how much he riles Conservative Members.

As for my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan): what a tour de force. He spoke without notes and the excellence of his speech was greatly to his credit. We especially appreciated his kind remarks about his predecessor, David Price—a great favourite of ours who will be long remembered in this place. I am sure that my hon. Friend will represent his constituents as ably and with as much integrity as David Price did, and we look forward to hearing from my hon. Friend and from the hon. Member for Hyndburn again.

We have had continuous debates about the European Community during my time in the House and we are now approaching a watershed. The Maastricht treaty is important for several reasons. First, as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) rightly said, conditions now are very different from when the Community started. We are no longer in the cold war. There has been an enormous change in eastern Europe, and the treaty must be examined in the context of the challenges that Europe will face in future.

Today's state of affairs is very different from that which obtained 20 years ago when we signed up as members of the Community. The great change has been in the relations between the Community and eastern Europe—as the Prime Minister rightly said, that is the most significant change of all. It would be absurd to try to arrange a treaty that took no account of the changes in eastern Europe.

I know that a number of Members would like to concentrate on creating a deeper Europe before we create a broader one, but that option is not open to us. The enthusiasm to join among the east European states is such that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh rightly said, it would be intolerable if we ever turned our backs on it. That is why the idea of subsidiarity is of the greatest importance in this treaty. Everything should be judged against it—against how rigorously we can apply the principle of subsidiarity to every issue in the treaty.

As time has gone on, countries in the Community have seen to it, after their initial enthusiasm, that they took good care of their own. The French have never hesitated to do that. They coined the word "communautaire", but that word means whatever is good for the French. There has never been any doubt about that since the time of Colbert, and the French view of French policy is very different from ours. They want a European state favourable to the French. The more centralised the state that they can obtain to that end, the better they will be pleased.

This is not our idea, however. The love of the French for Cartesian logic has bred a race of functionaries certain that they are always right; of such is Mr. Delors. In France, this takes the form of protectionism; in Brussels it takes the form of deepening the European Community before broadening it. That means that Brussels will take every opportunity to centralise power, convinced that that is in the best interests of the Community.

What should our attitude to Brussels be? Given the new circumstances in eastern Europe, we must take a critical look at the institutions of the European Community and at what is proposed in the treaty. We should approach our European negotiations with the same caution as we would show to a particularly demanding mother-in-law with a tribe of foreign cousins on the make. That is what the European countries do, and we should do the same.

Of course we are wedded to Europe, but that does not mean that we should fail to look with a critical eye both at present Community institutions and at the proposals for the social chapter and the budget. The common agricultural policy is a long-standing European institution. I dare say there was much to be said for it when it was founded, at a time when Europe was short of food. It is now a disgrace. It provides poor support for farmers, it damages third-world agriculture and it is likely to ruin the GATT negotiations unless it is drastically reformed.

The CAP is also corrupt in a technical sense, in that the Court of Auditors has found far too many cases of fraud in claims for agricultural support. As Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission, I have had talks with the Comptroller and Auditor General before and since the Maastricht treaty to see what might be done to tighten up the procedures to counter this fraud. The House will know that, under article 206, both the European Council and the Parliament will examine the observations of the Court of

Auditors, and the Commission will report on measures taken to combat fraud. It seems to me that this is a real role for the European Parliament to play. It is one which our own PAC has played conspicuously well, with never a minority report in well over a century.

I hope that the European Parliament will call the Commission to account in just the same way as the PAC calls permanent secretaries to account, and I hope that it will be rigorous in its examination, because there is nothing worse than disrespect for the European Community because of the fraud of which there is far too much evidence. The European Parliament should play this extended role with our full backing.

I hope, too, that the European Parliament will make the fullest use of these powers and will devote rather more attention to detail of this kind and a little less to invoking the spirit of Charlemagne at good lunches—that would be good for European parliamentarians. They have a real job to do and it represents a welcome addition to their powers.

Subsidiarity, as I have said, is important. It has been followed more by other nations than by ourselves. The Italians regard the Community as a form of grand opera: overflowing sentiment, broken pledges and commitments unfulfilled. The French regard the Community as a form of outdoor relief for their farmers, as do Spain and Greece. The Germans think of the Community as a form of insurance against themselves. They are going through a rough time, but I do not doubt that they will recover and become the strong economic force forecast by Mrs. Thatcher.

I do not believe, however, that the best response is to station United States marines on the Rhine. Rather, we must regard a strong Germany as an opportunity for our exports; a weak and over-burdened economy, either of Germany or of France, cannot be good for Britain or for anyone else.

Economic success does not depend on a common currency. It would certainly be more convenient to have one, but, if we are to achieve economic success, there is no substitute for free trade and competition and doing away with waste such as that caused by the CAP. It is an illusion to suppose that we would lose our sovereignty if we adopted a common currency.

When we were strong, in Victorian times, sterling was fully convertible to gold, and no one complained that we would lose our sovereignty because of gold production by Californian or Australian gold miners. Nor did anyone complain after the war when, under the Bretton Woods agreement, sterling was made exactly equivalent to the dollar for many years. It might be argued that that resulted in our being wholly dependent on the Federal Reserve for the value of sterling, yet I do not recall anyone saying that we had surrendered our sovereignty then; no more will we in this case.

It is necessary to decide whether it is in our interests to adopt the very strict regimes that the Maastricht treaty provides—in other words, to reduce the deficit to about 3 per cent. of GDP. I do not know whether the House is aware of the fact that the Italian deficit is about 12 per cent. of GDP and there is no reasonable prospect of countries such as Greece reducing their GDP to such a degree. However, the 3 per cent. target is well worth aiming for.

The important question is whether the targets set for a common currency are desirable. If I believed that, in examining the coming expenditure round, my right hon. Friends could reduce the deficit swiftly to 3 per cent. of GDP, I should be very pleased, but I think that may be accomplished only with difficulty.

I shall be right behind my right hon. Friends in their efforts, but the idea that other countries would be able to do so swiftly and within the next four or five years is fanciful. When the other eastern European countries join the European Community—as we all hope they will—it will put those very desirable objectives in some doubt, so I believe that a single currency is many years hence.

I shall say a word or two about cohesion, which is another important part of the treaty. There is a notion that a large physical transfer of resources is the only way to provide the circumstances required for a single currency, but I do not believe that that is the case. Surely the economies that are growing most rapidly are those in the far east. There are transfers of resources in the far east, but they take the form of substantial investment by, for example, Japan, Singapore and Thailand and other developing countries.

There is no question of the Japanese transferring resources by taxing their citizens and giving away that money. There is substantial investment by the richer countries in the poorer countries, and I see no reason why we should not adopt the same attitude in the European Community. In fact, I would go further: we shall not be successful unless we have a free trade regime in which such investment can take place easily.

National Parliaments are closer to their peoples than the European Parliament can ever hope to be, and we can never afford to weaken the hold of democracy. We now have the strongest parliamentary democracy—indeed, the strongest Government—in Europe. More than at any other time we are now in a position to shape the future of Europe and make it a free trade, outward-looking community of nations, and I have every confidence that we shall seize that chance.

We are far from being a united Europe. There is much in the treaty that may cause us concern, but progress towards a united Europe can be better achieved not by grandiose sentiment or impractical arrangements but by the creation of conditions in which enterprise may flourish and in which new European businesses may be set up. I think that the Government have a better opportunity now than at any time since we became members of the Community to impress our leadership on the Community, and I hope that we shall seize that opportunity.

8.42 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I think that I might be the last member of the Labour party to be described as an enthusiastic European, but I put it on record that, since 1948, when I visited Hamburg and helped the Hamburg international youth club to rebuild the Gestapo headquarters into a new theatre, I have been anxious to see the rebuilding of an international Europe on democratic lines.

For the benefit of my colleagues who may not know this, I want to make clear my views on the various treaties that we have had to discuss in the past 20 years. I believe that they did not provide the fruit that I wanted and, above all, that they will be a danger not only to the democracy of our country but, conceivably, to that of our colleagues across the channel.

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

In that spirit, I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) because he mentioned two major issues on which I shall concentrate—the importance of the definition of subsidiarity and the importance of economic control and its link with democracy. The House cannot be unaware that control of finance, credit, taxation and expenditure and the criteria on which the decisions are made are fundamental to democratic representative institutions. I shall end my speech on that note.

Conservative Members have spent a lot of time discussing the unexpected and perhaps unwelcome results of the Single European Act, especially the definition of a single market as an area without frontiers. I believe—I think that this is becoming clearer—that the results of that Act, or that treaty, have not been easily predictable. I fear that the same will be true of the treaty that we are discussing now in its connection with the existing treaties and the results of the third treaty which we have yet to see. Indeed, I believe that it would be wrong for us in Committee to move to that stage of debate without a consolidated treaty which would be the result of the merger of the two documents that we are considering. Without that, I do not think that we can scrutinise its outcome.

Partly because of the way in which various ideas have been promulgated, it is possible that, while the Government have been skilful in their negotiation of the treaty, deep within the recesses of the Foreign Office certain ideas or descriptions may not have been what they should have been. That is a very serious charge—especially as I shall suggest that it applies to the Prime Minister himself, whom I shall quote in a few moments—but that is perhaps not altogether a surprise for those of us who served on the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.

A few years ago, when that Committee was dealing with the constitution of our Commonwealth in Canada and the relationships between this Parliament and that country, the Foreign Office's legal department told us how it had advised successive Prime Ministers of this country. Through careful work, we discovered that it had advised successive Prime Ministers incorrectly. The documents of the Kershaw committee, as it was called, assisted us in resolving what might have been a very difficult situation between the two countries. I now return to what I said about the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister.

At Prime Minister's Question Time on 12 May, the Prime Minister gave his celebrated reply about sovereignty not being "up for grabs". I shall deal with that at the end of my remarks. He went on to say:

"perhaps one of the most essential parts of the Maastricht agreement was the agreement on subsidiarity—that things must be done on a national level when they can best be done on a national level".—[*Official Report*, 12 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 493.]

That might be a good definition, but it is not one that is in the treaty. As many colleagues may know, there is no definition of subsidiarity in the treaty. All that the treaty does—and it does so pretty importantly—is to state in article 3a how the principle shall be used.

Earlier today, the Prime Minister again quoted something about subsidiarity. I do not know whether he was quoting the treaty, but I shall, because one should do so on Second Reading. Article 3b states:

"In areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Community shall take action, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community."

I shall not spend long on the exegesis of that complex statement, but one can see that there are three variables even when the undefined principle is applied and, of course, the judgment on that matter—surprise, surprise—lies with the European Court of Justice.

Perhaps the most important part of it is the first sentence, which refers to areas which do not fall within the Community's exclusive competence. In other words, in areas which fall within the exclusive competence of the Community, subsidiarity, whatever its principle and whatever its definition, does not apply. That is the clear meaning of the article which is to be added to the treaty.

I have tried to find a definition of the exclusive competence of the Community. I tabled two questions to the Attorney-General. By great good fortune, an answer to my most recent question appeared in *Hansard* yesterday. The Attorney-General refers to my previous question, in which I used the word "jurisdiction", which has been changed in the treaty from December 1991. In effect, the right hon. and learned Gentleman states that the answer is the same. He states:

"The answer to the hon. Member's question about exclusive competence is the same as to his question about exclusive jurisdiction, mutatis mutandis: the European Community has exclusive competence where that is conferred upon it by treaty provision or measures taken under the treaty. Current examples include the common agricultural policy, the common commercial policy and the external tariff."—[*Official Report*, 19 May 1992; Vol. 208, c.67.]

It being a legal opinion, I should have thought that it might have been a good thing for the Attorney-General to continue with what would have been an inclusive list. Instead, he merely gives examples, which I do not think is good enough. I hope that we shall hear more about this matter in Committee. Without a definition—perhaps it will have to come from the European Court of Justice and not from the Attorney-General—we would not know where subsidiarity, even as defined in or operated under the article, would operate.

Accordingly, I challenge the basis of many of the statements that have been made about the wondrous word "subsidiarity". Indeed, I am left wondering whether there has been some publicity which has gone slightly beyond the accurate. My Front-Bench colleagues circulated a document earlier this week which referred to the treaty enshrining the concept of subsidiarity. It contained a quotation which, while taken from the treaty, I think was not entirely accurate.

Perhaps the prize goes to Mr. Baker—not the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), but the Secretary of State of the United States of America. He was quoted, presumably accurately, by my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) on 20 November as saying:

"the architects of a united Europe have adopted the principle of 'subsidiarity', something like American 'federalism'—that is, the devolution of responsibility to the lowest level of government capable of performing it effectively."

My hon. Friend then said:

"Clearly the American Secretary of State has not been paid to listen to the right hon. Member for Finchley"—[*Official Report*, 20 November 1991 ; Vol. 199, c. 380.]

I do not think that the American Secretary of State has it right, and I cannot speculate why there has been some slippage between the article and the American Secretary of

State. I am merely saying that for some reason—I shall not speculate—there has been a massive misinterpretation of an extremely important article, albeit by the Prime Minister as well as others.

The hon. Member for Horsham talked about the single currency, the single bank and economic and monetary union. I must refer now to the views of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench. They were set out clearly by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) on 21 November. When criticising the Government, he said:

"We have heard nothing from the Government about their participation in the discussions in the economic intergovernmental conference about the accountability of the proposed European central bank and the allocation of responsibilities for economic and monetary policy between the Economic and Finance Ministers and the proposed central bank.

The Labour party has argued consistently for the bank to operate in a stronger framework of political accountability than the present draft treaty proposes. Like the French Government, we believe that ECOFIN—the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers—should play a crucial role in determining overall economic and monetary policy. We believe that it is important, for example, that the setting of the external exchange rate for a single currency should be a matter for ECOFIN."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 508.]

Similar sentiments were set out in the Labour party's election manifesto.

At the risk of being tedious, I shall read article 107 of the treaty. I think that it is right that I should do so. It states:

"When exercising the powers and carrying out the tasks and duties conferred upon them by this Treaty and the Statute of the ESCB, neither the ECB, nor a national central bank, not any member of their decision-making bodies shall seek or take instructions from Community institutions or bodies, from any government of a Member State or from any other body. The Community institutions and bodies and the governments of the Member States undertake to respect this principle and not to seek to influence the members of the decision-making bodies of the ECB or of the national central banks in the performance of their tasks."

What greater separation can there be between the elected representatives of the people here and in the other countries of the Community and the central, economic, fiscal and taxation authorities, bodies that play such an important part in the economic life of the Community and of the United Kingdom?

That is why I believe that my right hon. and hon. Friends were right when, before Christmas, they set a target that would satisfy them in terms of the relationship and democratic accountability that we seek. I do not think that the target has been reached and that is an important reason—perhaps the crucial one—why I cannot support the treaty. Indeed, it has been said by hon. Members on both sides of the House that, the Opposition having made that point in the reasoned amendment and having lost the amendment, we cannot then proceed to vote against the Bill itself. Surely one must follow the other.

Without that which we seek, how can we see that the essential quality of democracy that the Community claims as one of its major features will be retained inside its institutions and inside the very nations that form the Community? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said, unless people have the power to change policies, including economic policies, and to change the people who determine those policies—it is a major democratic right—how can there be a link with democracy?

I return to the Prime Minister, who I believe got it wrong on subsidiarity on 12 May. I am sorry to say that I think he has it wrong on this issue. He said:

"The sovereignty of the House is not a matter that is up for grabs—that is perfectly clear."—[*Official Report*, 12 May 1991; Vol. 207, c.493.]

I do not think that it is clear at all. If the position is that which the Prime Minister states, why do we have clause 2? Clause 2 provides the opt-out that would allow that "grab" to happen.

Perhaps one of the most interesting comments that I could make about the Prime Minister and his very skilful Foreign Secretary is that they managed to obtain that temporary reprieve in very difficult circumstances. However, those circumstances showed that that power, sovereignty and linkage—not a popular word with some of my colleagues—were up for grabs. That is why we are having this debate.

How is it that a Prime Minister of this country can say that even his responsibilities as First Lord of the Treasury —there lies the power—are not up for grabs, when clearly the function of our Treasury is to be taken away, perhaps under pressure and certainly under the treaty, if the opt-out is not used? I am talking of those very functions on which the treaty says there should be no political linkage.

If Europe is not to be dominated by bankers for bankers, there must be some form of democratic accountability. I cannot see that in the treaty or in the aspirations of those who support it. That is why I shall vote against the Bill tomorrow.

9 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I am grateful to be called at this stage of what has become an increasingly interesting debate, in which there have been a number of enthusiastic speeches about the future of the European Community and our involvement in it.

In this Parliament, with its traditions, one has to be careful about praising Members of another party, but the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) was kind enough to refer to my role as chairman of the European Movement. That movement embraces politicians of all the political parties, people who are not members of any party, members of other groups and, indeed, individuals. Praising a Member of another party is more of a habit in some of the continental Parliaments, where it is not viewed as sinful to agree with someone on the opposite side. Here, it is still regarded as a slightly sinful act.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) made an enthusiastic, striking and excellent maiden speech—and without any notes, as other hon. Members have already said. It was a striking reaffirmation of enthusiasm for the European Community. The good thing about that and other speeches is that they provide a balance that reflects the growing consensus in this House in favour of the Maastricht treaty *[Interruption.]*

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) is heckling, but I cannot quite catch what he is saying. I repeat with unequivocal emphasis, so that he can absorb it more easily, that there is a growing consensual enthusiam for Maastricht, for the skilful negotiations conducted by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his senior ministerial team and for all the implications that flow from this Bill and from the Maastricht treaty, which adds to the treaty of Rome and other related treaties.

[Mr. Hugh Dykes]

That growing enthusiasm is very good for the country. It was, at least to some extent, a background factor in the general election, although I agree that it is difficult to measure precisely. Although mainly domestic political, social and economic factors were at the heart of the general election campaign, an important background factor was the Government's great success in negotiating at Maastricht a treaty for this country that will stand us in good stead with the other member states. Therefore, the scope for negative speeches tonight and tomorrow is limited, because increasingly the public want the House of Commons to be enthusiastic and positive about these matters.

Other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall refer only briefly to the important provisions in the treaty. I remind both sides of the House that article 3c refers to

"an internal market characterised by the abolition, as between Member States, of obstacles to the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital."

That is a solemn and important aspiration, both of the treaty and of other member states. It is not to be taken lightly; it is a serious commitment.

In the Single European Act, the British Government regarded the creation of a single market as the most important component. They, above all others, insisted on the operational applicability and practicability of majority voting in order to get that primary component of the Act through the House and accepted by the other member states. That therefore equally binds this country and this Government to an equally solemn commitment.

As was evident in the ratification debate in the National Assembly in Paris, the main preoccupation was not economic and monetary union or other matters of enormous importance to the future of the Community and to the accretion of greater sovereignty by sharing it with others. That is the definition of a strong and powerful geopolitical treaty—a part of our history—and this treaty is another important example of it.

In view of the anxiety shown in Paris and the anxiety that exists in Britain and Germany, and now in Italy, which has rather weak immigration provisions, it is right for the Government to express reservations about what compromise will eventuate in the area of immigration controls. However, we cannot go too far down that road without distorting the single market that we want to create.

The idea that there can be completely free discretionary movement of goods and freight and severe restrictions on people moving through the Community channels, because it is not possible physically to segregate them in any practical way in principal ports and airports, would, I think, be completely unacceptable to British citizens in growing numbers, not simply to active politicians in this place and in the upper House who take a deep interest in the matter. The Government would face certain difficulties —I do not say this with any pleasure—if they were to go too far down the path of a solution that would produce a practical restriction.

The Government have said repeatedly both previously and, subject to reading *Hansard* tomorrow, in this debate as well, that that will not be a problem and that in the intra-Community between the member states—the citizens of each member state are now to be citizens of the European union as well—people have the exclusive 100 per cent. total right, subject only to the restrictions of criminality and prosecution the traditional authorities of the member states, to move between the member states.

The Government must have regard to what would happen if that right were to be too limited. I sympathise with the Government on the problems. It will be essential to have that practical segregation of the channels in ports and airports, but I believe that it can be done in a satisfactory way.

The other point that must be made concerns the huge area of economic and monetary union. I referred earlier to a German bank's report which referred to the social chapter, but that does not necessarily mean that I do not understand and, to some extent, sympathise greatly with the Government's reservations on the social chapter provisions. We have seen the campaign launched by the CBI saying that we did not want to be hamstrung or handicapped by some social charter provisions that would strike adversely at Britain's growing economic and commercial recovery which has resulted in the past few years from successful economic management by a Conservative Government who are now in their fourth term. The CBI did not want to see that achievement reversed, reduced or harmed in any way.

It is interesting to observe and reflect on how much more relaxed people in other continental countries are, including those who represent the general capitalist class, about some of the social charter provisions. I imagine that, as they come off the production line as individual items, we shall be able to accept at least part of them and so return to the greater cohesion that the other 11 member states increasingly feel about the measures.

It is a mistake for us and some of our anti-European colleagues here and elsewhere to say that other countries are indulging in fundamental second thoughts on the Maastricht provisions. That is simply not true. There is no evidence of it. I remind the House once again that in the National Assembly debate, when 77 members voted against ratification but a huge majority was in favour, the preoccupation was with immigration and other such matters, not the central provisions of the Maastricht treaty.

But there will always be suggestions on economic and monetary union—it has been said at least once tonight —that stage 3 will never be reached because the criteria are unrealisable and because other economic and financial circumstances will deter various other member states from even wishing to accept stage 3. I do not believe that. It would, for all sorts of reasons, be untenable and wrong to suggest that there may be renegotiations on some of the provisions, but obviously that alternative may arise in order to get stage 3 going properly.

As to containing the situation in respect of Italy's large deficit, I remind the House that European Finance Ministers urged the Italians again yesterday to begin their programme of public expenditure cuts. Italy is the worst example, but even that does not gainsay that EMU stage 3 is an objective for the entire Community.

There is far too much obsession in the House and elsewhere with the apparent but rather phantasmagorical argument that the Commission is accruing to itself excessive powers on an exponential basis, becoming tyrannical and dictatorial, and telling everyone what to do without proper consultation or accountability. That totally misrepresents the true position.

Sometimes, the much-maligned Jacques Delors deserves to be criticised. I am not defending him tonight, but perhaps a member of the Opposition Front Bench will say something. Nevertheless, when he makes major policy declarations, they are more and more in response to requests from—guess who? surprise, surprise—member states. They are for ever asking the Commission to do more by way of new programmes and policy formulation. That was the background to the whole EMU exercise, which involved an intergovernmental committee, not the Commission machinery itself.

Also, Jacques Delors speaks with the combined authority of all the other Commissioners, who—surprise, surprise—include the two British Commissioners. Although there is frequently a majority vote, most of the time policy declarations are unanimous. Jacques Delors —the sole dictator, unelected and with no democratic accountability—acts on behalf of them all, and produces programmes that arise from the Community's own legislation, treaties, and duties that are given to the Commission by delegated legislation and powers.

That is not at all terrifying, despite the remarks of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). If the Commission did not produce those programmes, we would roundly criticise it for dereliction of duty, not bothering with its task, and failing to undertake its work.

Not one speaker tonight arrived at a logical conclusion as to how—though this is beginning to occur in the Maastricht provisions—we can more easily take care of the fact that the Commission is not directly accountable in the way that we should like, and the way that we perceive national Governments to be. In a sense, perhaps accountability is at its strongest here, by comparison with other national Parliaments—but we have many weaknesses as well. Other national Parliaments, such as that of Denmark, provide examples of strong accountability.

Also absent from the speeches made so far has been any mention of the increased powers of the European Parliament. That is the way to achieve greater practical control of the Commission—so that well-informed, well-researched, and well-paid members of the European Parliament can pursue the Commission and ask it questions.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dykes: I think not.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Go on."] As I finish my remarks, I shall think about giving way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): My hon. Friend should be a parliamentarian—a British parliamentarian.

Mr. Dykes: I may tell my hon. Friend that I am.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Right hon. and hon. Members know full well that if a speaker chooses not to give way, he is entitled to continue.

Mr. Dykes: Despite your kind advice, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am still thinking about giving way to my hon. Friend in a moment.

We can also at long last begin the crucial exercise of building on the liaison between national Parliaments with the European Parliament. Several of my right hon. and hon. Friends are nervous about all the foreign adventures in which we are engaged, but about which the public are increasingly enthusiastic—and is that not annoying to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West and others? What they do not want is the greater democracy that would be implanted by those two exercises: increased powers, activity and authority for the European Parliament, and more working together by national Parliaments—particularly our own Parliament, with all its experience of trying to keep the Executive in order.

I say that partly with tongue in cheek. As we know from our own experience, heavy whipping being the fate of all Members of Parliament, that would be the most crucial way in which it could then be said that the Community had reined in, on behalf of its citizens—citizens of the union as well as those of the member states—the necessary democratic and parliamentary control. So often the "antis" do not want to accept that—which is why I now give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West.

Mr. Budgen: I am sure that the whole House is excited and elated to hear of the new role of the European Parliament that is envisaged by my hon. Friend. No doubt we can look forward confidently to such proposals as and when we move further into the heart of Europe.

May I ask whether my hon. Friend is in favour of tax-raising powers for the European Parliament?

Mr. Dykes: Not at this stage, and perhaps not for very many years. The only real answer that can be given to my hon. Friend's interesting question is this. If a central tax-raising capacity is eventually created in the Community, it is possible that such powers will eventually follow. It will depend on how the structure of European union works out—and we are talking of a union of sovereign states; it is not federal in the sense that anyone is suggesting the creation of a single sinister super-state Government based in Brussels.

I very much doubt whether that will happen, however. It is much more likely that the European Parliament will have a limited residual role. That might reduce the accountability that I have been asserting, and, because I have been suggesting otherwise, my hon. Friend could claim that I am being illogical. I am talking, however, of a separating of powers—a tussle between various layers of politics and various different institutions. That is the only answer that I can give at this stage.

Perhaps I am now being phantasmagorical, as the "antis" often are, but I believe that there is a chance that we could agree on a common voting system for the European Parliament next time. Such a system could be based on the regional list construction——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dykes: Not to my hon. and learned Friend. I must finish my speech.

The other possible alternative is the multi-member constituency structure. As all this is only a couple of years away, however, that may not be a possibility. I know that the prospect is terrifying for some of my hon. Friends, but the nettle must be grasped in due course. In the meantime, I hope that the whole House will give an enthusiastic welcome to this excellent Bill tomorrow night.

9.17 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Even the good-humoured hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) will recollect that his patience was a little stretched in the indirectly elected European Parliament when some of our French colleagues went into "explications de vote". I am afraid that I must deliver one of those tonight, however: I must explain to my colleagues and the House that tomorrow night I shall vote for Maastricht in the Division on the main question—voting, coincidentally, in the same Lobby as the Government.

The reason for my action goes back a long way. I am one of a dwindling band of Labour hon. Members in whose time the party was led by Hugh Gaitskell. It is now a matter of record that he talked about "a thousand years of history". As a very new Member for Parliament, I was hauled into his office—he was formidable, if charming—to explain the European beliefs that a number of us held at the time, and ever since then I have believed that those of us in the Labour party who are pro-Europe really have to say so—and to say so means voting accordingly, however uncomfortable that may have made us in the past.

Furthermore, I do not very much love the fact that the House of Commons as a whole is taken less and less seriously. When the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), bustling and perspiring, returned from Brussels to give his reports, in 1962, there were debates week after week that were attended not only by Mr. Macmillan, who was then Prime Minister, but by many of the heavyweights in his Cabinet. I am not making a party political point. My hon. Friends the members for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) have already been good enough to do that, but I have not spied a single member of the shadow Cabinet on the Opposition Front Bench since the main speeches were made. Equally, only the Foreign Secretary was here earlier.

I recollect that, apart from Harold Macmillan, Iain Macleod, as Leader of the House, certainly attended the debates on these vital constitutional matters, took notes and remembered everything. So did the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Reginald Maudling, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Christopher Soames, and many other Ministers of State. The House of Commons was taken seriously.

We have to ask ourselves tonight whether the House of Commons is being taken very seriously. When the Chairman of the Select Committee, the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), and the former Home Office Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold), were speaking, both of whom made important speeches, there was just a junior Treasury Minister taking notes. I do not complain about the Foreign Office Minister, who is assiduous. However, the Government as a whole are not taking the House of Commons seriously on this constitutional issue. That is a change. If one wants to make a point, one has to do it these days by vote.

There are only four of us—my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and I —who, rightly or wrongly, were among the 69 Labour Members of Parliament who went into the pro-European Lobby on 28 October 1971. For those of us who do not regret it, it teaches the lesson that the only way to do this kind of thing is by vote. For that reason, I shall be voting for the Bill. I do not know how many of my hon. Friends will reach the same conclusion, because these are personal matters, but one has to ask why one feels so passionately about this question.

Let us talk about the future rather than about the past. A number of us believe strongly that many of the world's future problems can be addressed only on a European basis. I do not complain about the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) not giving way, but he attacked centralism. As a concept, "centralism" is a bit of a dirty word, but how other than through a centralist approach does one approach the problem of the ozone layer, on which I had an Adjournment Debate on 4 March? How else other than on a central European basis can we do anything about the rain forests? And how else can we do anything about marine pollution? The air that we breathe is common. If we want to do something about chlorofluorocarbons in the third world and about skin cancer, we must do it on a European basis, or on an even wider basis than that.

Mr. Spearing: Wider, wider.

Mr. Dalyell: Yes, wider.

That brings us to some other questions for the Foreign Office, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has prompted them. I should like someone to answer the question, "How wide?" I listened to the Prime Minister with absolutely rapt attention. I may have got him wrong—it is difficult without seeing his speech in print—but some of my hon. Friends and I understood him to say that he hoped to bring Russia into the Community.

Mr. Garel-Jones *indicated assent.*

Mr. Dalyell: The Foreign Office Minister assents, so I do not think that I am wrong.

I speak as a friend of the Community. How wide is it to be? If we bring in Russia, the Community will stretch from Ireland to the Aleutian Islands. Where, incidentally, do we draw the boundaries? If we include Czechoslovakia and Hungary, then Romania, and if we take in Russia, do we then exclude the Ukraine? I do not think so. Then we must consider the difficult area of Kazakhstan and the Asian republics. I am asking for a Foreign Office comment on where the line should be drawn. It will become logistically unmanageable.

I listened to the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) speaking of fraud. It so happens that I was a member of the sub-committee of the Budget Committee of the indirectly elected European Parliament, which looked precisely at the issue of fraud. When we investigated, for instance, how funds were spent in relation to a dreadful earthquakes, at Udine and Germona, in Friuli, I was extremely impressed that there was absolutely no sign that funds had been misappropriated. Because no Italian would go, there was the Earl of Bessborough, myself and one of our German colleagues, and we all came to that conclusion.

Any genuine accusation against the Community for squandering funds may be misplaced. I think that they are basically honest and competent people in Brussels. If the Minister has an idea of fraudulent incidents, of course they must be investigated. As a former member of the Public

Accounts Committee, I know that we have our problems and so do they, but I should like a defence of the much maligned Brussels bureaucracy in relation to fraud.

If I vote in the way that I have mentioned, it is partly for another reason. I had an extremely expensive education, as did a number of my colleagues——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Eton?

Mr. Dalyell: I had an expensive education—it is not where my hon. Friends think—in the European Parliament, from 1976 to 1979. It was an eye-opener. The conclusion that I draw from my experience in Europe is that, unless one is enthusiastically at the heart, one will not carry much weight. As happens so often in politics, the halfway house can be the worst of all possible worlds.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South, my right hon. Friends the Members for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), and doubtless my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), have a right—perhaps it is a duty—to go into another Lobby to vote. If they do not do so, in the light of what they have said or doubtless will say, they will debase the House of Commons. I am a believer in the House of Commons, but equally, my right hon. and hon. Friends will allow me to go into a different Lobby to vote.

Mr. Benn: Hear, hear.

Mr. Dalyell: I am glad to have the support of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) on this matter. Although we take different views, perhaps we are united in thinking that we should vote. In view of the time, I shall limit myself to one more question to the Minister.

Mr. Foulkes: A very important question.

Mr. Dalyell: It is not a parochial question; it is an important question.

I should like the Minister to say a little about how the Foreign Office sees the relations post-Maastricht between the Community and major local authorities and regions. I will be excused for thinking particularly of Lothian region. Partly as a result of the efforts of its excellent Member of the European Parliament, David Martin, good relations have been established. A great many of my constituents think, rightly or wrongly, that they have better relations with Brussels than with Westminster.

Dr. Godman: That is true enough.

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend says that that is true. The truth is that, among the Scots, the Community is pretty popular. I happen to think that the prospect of independence for Scotland within the Community is extremely unreal. The Germans will ask, "What about the Bavarians?" and the Spaniards will ask, "What about the Catalans and the Basques?", as the Minister knows better than anyone. Nevertheless, the Community is well regarded by the electors in Scotland who sent me to the House of Commons.

How can we establish better links post-Maastricht between Brussels and Strathclyde, Lothian region, Grampian and so on? Madam Speaker, you asked us at the beginning to be disciplined as to time. All of us could go on and on, but on that question I conclude.

9.31 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I follow the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) in one particular, but I prefer to use the English language. This speech is by way of being an explanation of my voting intentions.

Maastricht was the most effective defensive battle fought on the European mainland by a British leader since the Duke of Wellington at the lines of Torres Vedras. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is to be congratulated on his success. It was truly magnificent. I also add my congratulations to the Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones). His victory has had its effect. There has even been progress since Maastricht.

I understand that the French to some extent, the Germans to a greater extent and the Danes, who knows, are having second thoughts. Even better, the United Kingdom is seen since the election as having the potential for an economic and political stability that is the envy of our partners in Europe. We are about to secure the powers of the presidency of the Community in July. We have a new credibility born of a positive, if not yet federal, vision of Europe.

It is we, we are told, who will have the power to mould the Community. Brussels will be putty in our hands. "Do not rock the boat, things are going our way"—that is the message to my hon. Friends. It is mood music. It is sweet, it is seductive, but it is mood music. Sadly, such a scenario is one of hopes and aspirations—a grand strategy of apple pie and motherhood, but not yet reality. It is that reality which is before us today. It is much more mundane. It is the hard reality of legislation, the allocation of powers and the who and the how of its control.

Many hon. Members will remember that much the same overture was played at the time of the Single European Act. The chorus then was equally harmonious to most ears, even though then, as now, no one really understood the score. For example, we were told, as we have been told tonight, that the rights of workers, not least the length of the working week, was a matter for unanimity, eventually a matter that could be decided in this House. We were told that our methods of immigration control were a matter for unanimity and effectively, in the last resort, a matter for the competence of this House. Nor did we then imagine for one brief moment that a domestic matter such as tobacco advertising would be other than under our control.

We have been cheated, swindled and mugged by the self-same institutions that this very day are grovelling on their knees for us to give them more of our powers. Having lost our innocence and our wallets, does it not seem a little perverse to venture again so soon on to the dark back streets of Brussels?

The Single European Act was a mere 23 pages of intractable and ambiguous prose. It was clear, curt and comprehensible in comparison with the 134-page monster from Maastricht that I have here. Surely, before we consider surrendering yet more power over such areas as the environment, health, education, training, citizenship and culture—you name it, they will have it—should we not first clarify the present arrangements?

When we know that there will be no 48-hour week, when we have an undertaking that our system of border controls can remain, when we have clear evidence from the

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European Court of Justice that its understanding of subsidiarity is the same as that of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, then—and only then—may the House feel that it is safe to consider the treaty. Once bitten, twice shy; once cheated, mad to buy.

Whatever our differences, one thing binds us together in the House—we are all Members of Parliament. Today, we have an awesome responsibility to the House and to our predecessors and successors. We are the guardians of the powers and privileges of the House and, through it, of the rights, liberties and well-being of our people. The passage of the Bill would shrink this Parliament and demote the democratic safeguards of our people.

Maastricht was a brilliant tactical victory, but the forces of federalism—artificially camouflaged during ratification—have yet to be banished. The heart of Bonaparte still beats in many breasts—*[Laughter]*—for example, over on the Opposition side. The House should dedicate itself to the fight against Bonapartism. This should be the trumpet, the clarion call, the beginning of a march to a second Waterloo.

9.38 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I begin with the complaint made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—hoping to take advantage of his presence—about the attempt to polarise this debate between the pro- and anti- Europeans. I am sympathetic to his complaint, as that is too simple a way to view the debate. He tried to turn it into a debate between democrats and anti-democrats—that was much of the thrust of his speech.

If one is concerned about the lack of democracy in Community arrangements, the answer is to stay within the Community and attempt to change or improve it, to make it more democratic, rather than to talk about withdrawing from it. There are many ways in which we could do that. We could improve the powers of the European Parliament and we could, and I believe that, eventually, we will, make the Commission and its President directly accountable to the citizens of the Community.

The real division that underlines this debate is not between democrats and anti-democrats or pro-Europeans and anti-Europeans, but between unionists and nationalists. That is the key philosophy that divides people within the parties as well as across the Chamber. I am justified in identifying my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield and others who have spoken against the treaty as nationalists from the tone of their remarks and from looking at the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend and other hon. Friends. That amendment contains my right hon. Friend's specific aspiration for a

"wider association of fully self-governing nations, harmonizing their policies by consent . . . rights or self-government of all the Member States".

I am not seeking to denigrate the nationalist case I want to be exact about it. I acknowledge that the nationalist point of view, whether we are talking about Scottish nationalists or Welsh nationalists——

Dr. Godman: Or English nationalists.

Mr. Macdonald: Yes, indeed. I accept that that nationalist case is a respectable and sustainable one. I have the highest regard for people who feel in their heart of hearts that they must defend the rights of their nation to full self-government and the exercise of sovereignty.

It is a little odd to talk about nationalism or to put the case for national self-government in this Chamber. This Parliament is unique among west European Parliaments, because it is not a national Parliament, but a multinational one. The arguments that have been advanced by my right hon. Friends the Members for Chesterfield and for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and others echo those advanced in the Scottish Parliament in 1707.

In 1707, similar crucial decisions had to be made about giving up the right to self-determination, including specific financial and fiscal rights. In 1707, people decided that it was worth giving up those national rights for the greater political adhesion of the United Kingdom. I believe that we face crossing a similar threshold in this decade as we consider the fate of western Europe.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield that, as we come to make decisions about the treaty in the months and years to come, we must have our eyes open about what we are committed to. It is clear that the treaty is not a treaty in terms of co-operation, alliance or partnership between Governments; nor does it speak, as others have tried to suggest, about intergovernmental consultation and collaboration. It is a treaty of political, social and economic union.

As has been rightly pointed out—it needs to be emphasised again and again—article A of the treaty says:

"the High Contracting Parties establish among themselves a European Union."

That has been disguised by some of the comments that have been made tonight and, to some extent, by what the Government have tried to suggest the Bill is all about. Indeed, the Bill's fundamental nature could not be discerned by looking at its title: "The European Communities (Amendment) Bill". It sounds like a secondary piece of legislation that merely adds or tidies up details, consequent upon the original accession to the treaty of Rome. In reality, the Bill does something fundamentally different. It represents a wholly new departure from the political life of our country and the other countries that are about to participate in the union.

The treaty sets up a common citizenship, common fiscal and monetary policies, a common social policy and a common foreign and security policy. The Bill should therefore be called the European Union Bill and we would then know what we were really talking about. It represents all the apparatus and language of the multinational political union, that we are now engaged in establishing.

Some hon. Members have asked what kind of Europe we are embarking on. Reference has been made to the Prime Minister's comment on a Europe embracing Russia. It is not the first time that he has used that phrase—I have heard him use such language before. Surely a Europe that embraces Russia cannot be the kind of Europe that the treaty talks about constructing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said, it would be logistically impossible to extend the competencies allowed for in the treaty all the way from the Hebrides to Vladivostok.

It is fantastical to think that the European union that we are discussing can be extended so far, because the essence of the success of the project on which we are embarking—a political community—depends on whether the citizens of that community consider themselves to be

part of a distinctive, unique, separate political community. Do they genuinely feel that they are fellow citizens? Do they share the subjective attitudes and emotions necessary to engage in the construction of a political community? Do they share enough historically, culturally and in their way of looking at the world, especially politically?

The key difference that divides hon. Members tonight is between those who feel strongly that a sense of political union is now developing across western Europe and those who simply cannot find it in themselves to share that sense. I am one of those who feel strongly that we are developing a sense of political community across western Europe, and that the appropriate expression for that sense is the sort of European union that we are now engaged in constructing.

There are four key aspects or fundamental principles in the treaty. I wish that I could say that one of the principles was to make institutions more democratic, but I do not think it is—work still needs to be done on that.

The treaty contains the principle of subsidiarity, which is extremely important. It has been discussed sufficiently this evening, so I shall say no more about it except to note the importance of the setting up of the Committee of the Regions. I acknowledge the reservations of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) that the Committee of the Regions will not have real powers. It is an advisory committee, but that in itself is important, as the committee will begin to have an influence and to shape the future development of European union.

The pity is that the principle of subsidiarity is not being applied in the United Kingdom. The German lander are now acquiring increased powers in the context of the development of European union, and even over the foreign policies of the federal German Government. We in Scotland clearly expressed our desire for such subsidiarity in Scotland, but are being denied it.

The second fundamental principle in the treaty is a push towards economic convergence and cohesion. On this issue I disagree radically with the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell). It seems obvious that economic and monetary union must lead to the greater use of regional policy, and an elaborate and developed system of fiscal transfer within the Community—a means of distributing money within the Community from those districts that are better off to those that are not so well off. That must happen as a consequence of economic and monetary union, in exactly the same way as it would within an individual nation state.

The right hon. Member for Guildford said that modern Conservative Britain was moving away from the notion of regional policy and transferring money. Regional policy may have ended, but by far the greatest part of the transfer of money occurs in other ways such as spending on education, health, social security and the building of roads and railways. That is how money is transferred and distributed throughout a political community such as the United Kingdom, and that is what must eventually happen within the Community. That process must happen as, if we have monetary union, we will lose our present defensive mechanism of the manipulation of currencies and the exchange rate. If we lose that defence, we must replace it with a system of fiscal transfer.

The third fundamental principle is related to the second one and involves the introduction, for the first time, of the notion of a social Europe. Europe is not just about the free movement of goods and capital, but about having common standards of welfare and working conditions in the Community—the subject of the famous escape clause won by the Prime Minister. But that clause is worth very little. It is inevitable that what is agreed by the other member states will gradually, instrument by instrument and Act by Act, be taken on board by the Government.

From a purely partisan point of view, it might almost be a good thing that the Government won an escape clause, because that stops them gumming up the works beforehand, and it means that the instruments and agreements that will be reached will be arrived at on the basis of a social philosophy shared by Social Democrats and Christian Democrats in the rest of the Community—a philosophy fundamentally different from that of the Government. Perhaps the Government would not have played a constructive role on social policy and are better off out of it. They will have to accept what is agreed in their absence, however.

My final theme is not mentioned in the Bill but is fundamental to the treaty—the establishment of a common foreign and security policy. Article B of the treaty states that the new European union shall

"assert its identity on the international scene, in particular through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy including the eventual framing of a common defence policy".

The treaty goes on to mention the need to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests and independence of the European union.

The treaty explicitly refers to the need to adopt common positions in international forums, citing the United Nations as an example. Secondly, contrary to what many have said, the European Commission and hence the Community will have a role in a common foreign and security policy. Finally and crucially, the Western European Union has declared itself to be the defence component of the European union. So the pieces are all in place: the notions of economic union, of citizenship, of social union and political union, and now of a common foreign and security policy. The treaty will create a new multinational union, which is why I look forward with optimism to the future of that European union.

9.57 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): The hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) suggested that differences of opinion in this debate can be characterised along the lines of those who are nationalist and those who are unionist. That may be true in Scotland, but it does not do justice to differences present in the rest of the kingdom and in this Chamber. Those differences are a good deal more subtle and profound than that.

I pay tribute to the two maiden speeches that we have heard this evening. The hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope), in a remarkable contribution, showed a great deal of humour and—much appreciated by Conservative Members—generosity to our former colleague, Ken Hargreaves. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan), in a remarkable opening innings, showed us that some good can come out of the BBC.

With the exception of these two maiden speeches, however, we have had a rerun of many previous debates—most of us are old hands at them now. We have made our points many times before, which is not to deny that we are considering a fundamental and crucial step forward in European affairs. Crucial and fundamental though the

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

issue is, I find it depressing that we still get bogged down in detail and that none of us can get away from our basic attitudes, which cut right across party lines.

I do not think that most hon. Members reflect the weight of opinion in our respective parties, and I worry increasingly that the tenor of the debate is out of tune with the mood of the country, which is much less querulous and questioning and more disposed to accept the reality of Britain's relationship with the European Community and Britain's right and duty—this has now become a cliché—to be at the heart of that Community. We do our constituents a disservice if we do not listen to that development outside.

Some of us, consistently, honestly and with honour—from the beginning, from Messina, and certainly from 1972—have always been against Britain's participation in the European Community. While the camouflage or cosmetics may change a little, the fundamental position never changes. It must be respected for its consistency, but, I think, for little else. I believe that it was always wrong. As the world develops, it becomes increasingly wrong and outmoded.

Whether we like it or not, the world is developing—or has developed—into three significant blocks. It is in our constituents' interests that Britain should be in one of those blocks. We may be nervous about that development—we may even deplore it—but it is happening, so it is especially important that Britain should be at the heart of one block. Through our history and our inclination we, as a nation, still have a strong instinct for internationalism and we have a distinct contribution to make to ensure that our block—the European Community—does not become fortress Europe but is outward-looking and that the world progresses in as cohesive a manner as possible.

The three poles are growing ever more real. Last year, the United States' GNP amounted to no less than $5·4 trillion. The European Community was not far behind with $4·6 trillion, and Asia was just behind with a little more than $4 trillion but growing at a tremendous rate, as we know. The growth rate in the major Asian countries last year was 5·75 per cent., and it is estimated that in the rest of the decade it will be 5·5 per cent. Last year, the volume of exports of the Asian countries increased by 13 per cent. on 1990, growing at four times the rate of the rest of the world.

I offer those figures rather late at night, which makes them even more indigestible than they would usually be, but they underline the challenge facing Britain's legislators to ensure that our country stays in the race. Many hon. Members, and many of my hon. Friends, would accept that thesis, but they would then say, "That's fine. All that we want is a free trade area, a trading relationship." That is not an option—it never was and it certainly will not be in the future. The experience of every country that seeks to separate economics from politics has proved that it is not possible. What happened in Gorbachev's Soviet Union and what is now happening in China proves that.

I remind the House that the need to relate economic and trading relationships with political and social relationships was identified about eight years ago by a far-sighted Head of Government of the European Community, who said that what was needed was

"a series of new policies to promote the economic, social and political growth"

on which the future well-being of the Community depended. The passage continues:

"This means giving greater depth to the Community in both its internal and its external activities."

The Head of Government then emphasised that the European Community should develop into something much more than a trading bloc and that it must be our objective

"to aim beyond the commercial policy through political co-operation towards a common approach to external affairs. You pointed out that the Community has 'weight and must show more political will to act together.'"

It was envisaged that it might even require military action.

The Head of Government then said:

"Our objective must be to strengthen the European pillar of the Alliance and improve European defence cooperation."

Finally, I quote the part of the speech where it is stated that there is a need to

"heighten the consciousness among our citizens of what unites us."

That is essentially the text that we should follow. The speech was made by my right hon. Friend—I think that she would have claimed to be that and I would claim her friendship—Mrs. Margaret Thatcher to the Heads of Government in June 1984. She set out the principles that we must adhere to and develop. That gives the answer to those who say that the European Community is merely a trading area.

There are two threats. There are those who say, "Let's jump off Europe. We are nothing to do with it, so let's forget it." There are others who say, "Let us have just a trading area." A third threat was highlighted significantly by the important contribution of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—that of stretching ever further eastwards and creating an entity that would be unwieldy. The hon. Gentleman raised an important question that we should consider carefully: just how far is far enough? If we want to make the entity work, there must be a limit. We cannot go on and on to Vladivostok or wherever. It is not merely a trading area that we are seeking to develop.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: My hon. Friend has said that we are split into three blocks. I have listened to him with care, but I do not understand what the blocks are or should be.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry that my hon. and learned Friend has not understood. As it is so late, I hope that he will forgive me if I do not retrace my steps. I wish to make some progress.

There is the danger of the federalist bogey. That there are arch-federalists—one or two collegues in the house may merit that label—in Brussels and other parts of Europe is something that cannot be denied. That they will always be there is something that will always be a reality. It is a reality also that the real dangers of the sort of federalism about which fears have understandably and justifiably been expressed this evening are increasingly recognised in the capitals of Europe. The pressures that a pell-mell rush towards a single currency would put on weak economies are increasingly understood. We should be ever alert to the dangers of federalism, but we should not, in adopting that approach, turn away from an extraordinary enterprise. The Maastricht achievement was an extraordinary one.

Our friends who have doubts and who wish to jump off and stop the train must ask themselves what it is that is attracting the Swedes, the Austrians, the Swiss, the Poles and others. Are they too stupid to understand the threat to

their national identity? Are they all socialists who wish to turn some great dirigiste structure and to be bossed around from Brussels? Are they failing to understand the impact of the huge economic differences between Germany, for example, and Czechoslovakia? Of course they are not that stupid. Of course they understand those threats, of course they understand those dangers—but what they also understand is the great challenge of the European enterprise. That is something which sometimes many of our colleagues forget as they become bogged down in minutiae.

While always fighting our corner about immigration controls, the 48-hour week and so on, we must not keep our eyes on the minutiae and forget the broad European enterprise, which the British people support and endorse.

10.10 pm

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): I promise to respond to the request that you made many hours ago, Madam Speaker, for hon. Members to be brief.

I have spent the past eight years in the European Parliament, but I have decided not to seek re-election in two years. One reason for that is that I do not share Delors's vision of the future of Europe—a vision which I believe is reflected in the Maastricht treaty. I do not share Delors's vision that decisions affecting the community in which I live in Blaenau Gwent increasingly should be made by bankers who are neither elected by nor accountable to our people. However, that is what an independent central bank is all about. The powers of those bankers would make it almost impossible for a future Labour Government to begin to respond to the problems in our communities—the bad housing, mass unemployment, and education and health services increasingly under attack.

I was brought up in south Wales to believe that it is the task of the Labour movement to try to take powers away from bankers and other unelected people. Therefore, I do not intend to allow history to turn on its head, and I will not vote to give bankers and others additional powers. If we allow that to happen, it will take economic decision making outside the political arena. Nor will I vote for another group of unelected, unaccountable individuals—the European Commissioners—to work alongside the unelected and unaccountable bankers and take decisions that will affect my community. If the Commissioners insist on those powers, as a Parliament we have the right to question their record and discover whether it stands up to serious analysis. In my opinion, it will not.

This very day, the EC is still spending more than 50 per cent. of its budget supporting the common agricultural policy. Not that long ago, a parliamentary answer showed that the average family in Britain was paying about £17·50 a week to support the CAP.

In a debate a few days ago, an hon. Member said that there was obvious anger among the people of our communities because in the past the EC had paid farmers not to grow food. I remember that some years ago the EC introduced a set-aside scheme to encourage farmers not to farm the land. What happened? I know of a Scottish farmer who had reached the grand old age of 31 and who received more than £200,000 from the EC not to farm his land. It was also agreed that within five years he could return to the soil and continue as normal.

Imagine what would happen if redundant coal miners and steel workers were offered similar payments. There would be a national uproar. But nothing was said when that money was given to big farmers.

Sir Russell Johnston: I appreciate the criticisms that the hon. Gentleman is making, but none is the fault of the Commission; they are the fault of the Council of Ministers on which the Government are represented.

Mr. Smith: It was the Commission which put forward the proposal and it is the Commission which wants the powers outlined in the Maastricht agreement. Therefore, it is right that we should look at the Commission's record.

What was happening to my community while all that money was being wasted? Very little money was being invested in regional aid or spent on trying to overcome problems of unemployment. But the Commission is not satisfied with wasting the money that it already has. Under the Delors plan, it wants billions of pounds more from member states. I would not give it an extra penny. Why should we give it extra powers when it has already misused those that it has?

Whether we are talking about bankers or Commissioners, those elected to take decisions will soon no longer have the power to do so, while those who were never elected will be taking the decisions on their behalf. If we allow that to happen, parliamentary democracy will become a sham. Future generations will never forgive us, and they would be right not to.

We have been told that this is probably the most important vote in which we will participate in the lifetime of this Parliament, and I agree, so I cannot abstain on the issue. In the months and years ahead, we shall be concerned not simply with the issues of Maastricht, but with issues such as proportional representation. If we are once again advised to abstain on that issue and proportional representation becomes a reality in Britain, decisions will increasingly be taken, as in Germany, not by the largest party but by those such as the Free Democrats who virtually never obtain more than 10 per cent. of the vote but who always wield the balance of power. Such Governments are formed not by the vote but by deals done behind closed doors by party leaders who are no longer accountable to anyone.

Would it not be ironic if the House were to accept proportional representation at a time when other countries in Europe are increasingly rejecting it and when other Governments in Europe are in chaos and fascism is once again raising its ugly head? I shall have nothing to do with proportional representation.

If we make points about the undemocratic nature of the EC, we are sometimes told that we are ignoring other positive developments such as subsidiarity. In theory, that may be right, but the reality is somewhat different. One example of that is the EC public procurement policy which has taken considerable powers from local authorities. I have been interested during past years to listen to the debate on the need for devolved Governments in Scotland and Wales, and while those debates were taking place, the EC, the Commission in Brussels, were taking from us the very powers for which we have fought in our own little communities.

History will judge us not on words but on actions. Therefore, we should judge the EC and the Maastricht treaty not on grand theories but on what is happening in

[Mr. Smith]

the real world—a move away from democracy, devolution of power and accountable government to decisions being made by those who have never had the courage to stand for election in order to put their ideas to the test. That is the direction in which the Maastricht treaty is taking us and that is why we must have the courage to reject it.

10.19 pm

Mr. Ian Duncan-Smith (Chingford): I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your election. As this is my maiden speech, I ask the House to bear with me if I make a series of mistakes.

Earlier, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) reminded the House of the great honour that our electorate bestow upon us in permitting us to represent their views and interests in a sovereign Parliament. I may point out that Chingford is officially part of Greater London, not Essex. Having heard the recent results in Basildon, I am sad that it is not part of Essex.

The majority of the people who live in Chingford have striven for a long time to buy their own properties, take care of their own lives, and make the most that they can —to hand on to future generations—from hard work and the sweat of their own brows. Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends will immediately recognise those as key principles that have supported conservatism, and which my party promoted during the whole of the 1980s. Chingford represents those interests, and we represent Chingford's interests.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) mentioned that there is a factory producing Mr. Kipling cakes in his constituency. I cannot boast of such a place, but we do have the London Rubber Company in the middle of my constituency. That company is heavily linked to today's debate. The House may recall the little problem that existed with the Italian regulations, on the size or width of certain items that London Rubber produces—so it has a keen interest in what goes on here.

Few constituencies are so associated with a particular individual as Chingford. I refer of course to my predecessor, Norman Tebbit. Some may remember only the "Spitting Image" vision of a leather jacket, studs, and chains—but I am sure that all right hon. and hon. Members will keep in mind the image of a man of incisive wit, telling rebukes, and most of all, reforming zeal.

If it were only for his political achievements, Norman would be remembered as one of the most important figures in British political history—but he is remembered for much more than that. The House owes him a great debt. On that terrible night in Brighton, the lives of Norman, Margaret, and their family were devastatingly and treacherously changed for the worst—yet at no time has Norman or Margaret complained, and they consistently serve as a great inspiration to me and many others.

It is not overstating the case to say that Norman brought great honour to the House. I know that all right hon. and hon. Members will join me in wishing him great happiness in the future, in all that he does.

So often in the past when Europe has been debated, there has been a knee-jerk level to the debates. It is said that there are those who are pro-Europe—the Europhiles —and those who are anti-Europe—the Euro-sceptics. If the issue is always polarised in that way, it will be impossible to have a rational debate. The question is rather, whether we want to interrogate certain aspects and regulations or not, the public have a right to know the detail, and it is important that we examine the detail of the treaty and put it before them. I will attempt to do that this evening.

Let me begin by congratulating my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor on their great negotiating skills, which have produced the treaty that is now before us. Their achievements in securing our exclusion from the social chapter protocol, and in reserving Parliament's right to decide whether to enter currency union, are greatly appreciated by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

As I read the treaty, however, I must confess to a growing disquiet. My chief worry is that, despite the Government's considerable successes, we remain locked into what I see as a continuing progression towards a European super-state. I consider that neither necessary nor desirable.

Maastricht—following, as it does, from the Single European Act and the treaty of Rome—embodies that movement; perhaps it is proceeding at a slower rate in this context, but it is a movement none the less. Let me explain —echoing what was said earlier by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies)—that my reasons for believing that are based fundamentally on the ethos that exists in the institutions that the Community now contains. I refer chiefly to the European Commission and the European Court.

In my view, successive Governments have failed fully to understand the way in which the Commission seeks constantly to advance its competence. In so doing, it will be supported by the European Court. The Commission is not just a bureaucratic body, as so many people seem to think; it has substantial law-making powers—very excutive powers. Beyond those powers, it exists as much to propose legislation to the Council of Ministers. Through its performance of both those roles, constant pressure will continue to extend the process of European integration.

All too often, press and politicians talk about Delors as though he were an expletive. His role is quite clear to him; I believe that it is our understanding of that role that is unclear. Obviously, the European institutions hold the key to the concern that I feel over Maastricht—the Single European Act and, originally, the treaty of Rome.

The European Court of Justice has the role of interpreting and applying Community law. Through the interpretation that it gives the treaties within the Community, it can and does fundamentally affect the balance between nation states and the Community. The Court, through its judgments, cannot be considered neutral by any means: it is part of those key institutions that consider it their duty constantly to push forward the concept of the Community, ultimately at the expense of the nation state.

An example of that is provided by a judgment in a case brought by the Netherlands against the high authority. The power of the Court was defined by the Court as

"the ultima ratio enabling the Community interest enshrined in the Treaty to prevail over inertia and resistance of member states."

Many other judgments also illustrate the point.

The history of the European Court clearly shows, time and again, that it will be far from impartial, invariably finding in favour of what it perceives as the interest of the

Community. Furthermore, the difference between the tradition of common law that exists in this country and the tradition of Continental law—based, as it is, so fundamentally on the code Napoleon—means, essentially, that the European Court will regularly fall back on the preambles to treaties, and will use them to interpret points, as it sees them, within the spirit of the agreement—the members. Every treaty that we have ever signed has given the Court greater scope to interpret.

The preamble to the treaty of Rome raises general provisions urging member states to attain ever closer union with general objectives. To most common law lawyers, that might appear fairly general on the surface. However, it is a major signpost in continental law. The preamble to the Single European Act is full of references to the states implementing a union. Article 1 clearly refers to progress towards European unity—a major signpost for the European Court.

Here we seem constantly to have disregarded the general wording of the preambles to the treaties. Under common law, they are not part of any agreement, but in the code Napoleon and continental law, they form a major part of any agreement. The treaty on European union sets out no less clearly in its preamble that defence, foreign policy, economic and social policies and the free movement of people are all set to converge in ways which on the surface may appear rather general but which will be critical to the functioning of the treaty. Therefore, across a full range of matters the Maastricht treaty extends further the areas to which Community law applies.

Given the natural desire to the Community institutions constantly to push forward with closer ties and greater compliance, it is natural that they will seek to find areas that are open to extensive secondary legislation affecting our national life that have not yet been affected.

That can be clearly seen in the proposals for a 48-hour working week. We never perceived under the Single European Act that that would necessarily be the case, but the Community—in the shape of the Commission, ultimately supported by the European court—pushes for that extra bit to be brought to the Commission, under majority voting. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is doing all she can to sort this out, and I wish her the very best of luck. However, I remain a touch pessimistic about the outcome.

Both sides of the House have made much of subsidiarity, probably because most people do not have a clue what the heck it means. I suspect that some hon. Members on both sides of the House also fall into that category. It is the devolving of power to a lower level, as perceived by the treaty—that of nation states. As a means of trying to retain control over our national identity, it should be given some approval, but if we look back we see that it is a two-edged sword. It very much cuts both ways.

Originally it was a papal concept. That concept was about power that could flow downwards to the constituent parts of the papal dominion. The key factor was that that power had to be given, as judged by the central authority. In line with that, if we come forward to Maastricht again, we see that it could imply that anything that cannot be justified at national level should, therefore, be taken to the European level. That is the other edge of the cutting sword: that the Community could easily turn round and say, "Justify the fact that you have the right to retain control over that area; otherwise, we shall take it under our powers and competence." It therefore follows that the European Court would ultimately find in favour of the Community. That is part of its ethos.

Therefore, I propose some measure of reform which I believe we must undertake if we are to make sure that the sort of Europe that we want to see is the one that goes through and that we can control. First, I propose that we should repeal sections 1 and 2 of the European Community Act 1972 and replace them with clear statements about this Parliament's supremacy over all European Community activities that affect the relationship between this House and the courts—and, in fact, all other constitutional matters.

Secondly, we should set about reforming the Commission, starting with the European Court. We should position a constitutional court over the Community, I stress, to take an impartial position on questions which affect the competence of nation states.

Thirdly, the Commission should be slimmed down, losing many of its existing portfolios. We should get rid of the position of the President and make the Commission more of a non-executive body. Those moderate suggestions are offered, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with some deference to your position.

Most of all, we must therefore seek to refocus the Community as one of a group of nation states determined to seek co-operation on a defined but limited number of areas. That would greatly assist the inclusion of other states, which is proposed and with which I thoroughly agree, while keeping the flow of trade as free as possible through co-operation not coercion.

From successive treaties, we have seen a growing erosion of the powers of the House to legislate, not to be overruled by the European Court. Much has been made about the exclusion of the word "federalism". Having read the treaty time and again, I have to say that, even if we exclude it, the obvious signs are there for all to see—that is, that that is the inevitable march. After all, a bite from a rottweiler hurts just as much even if we insist on calling it a pekinese.

We are asked to support the Government. There is no doubt in my mind of the Government's intentions, and those I support. However, the problem is that far too much trust is expected of us in this House to be vested in the institutions in the Community. I do not believe that, if we notice how the general tendency is to move towards greater integration, that trust will be well placed.

It has been ably pointed out several times that we have seen the Government and previous Governments fight rearguard actions to prevent the growing power of the Commission from encroaching. Those rearguard actions have been fought in the knowledge that we have signed up to something which has given the Commission powers to get in and take control of certain aspects of our lives.

The treaty is therefore somewhat out of date. It reflects, sadly, concerns from the past which are no longer relevant. I hope that, if we consider the problems and changes that are going on in the Community, hon. Members will agree with me. The treaty keeps the door open to a federalist, centralist and uncompetitive Europe which is clearly moving us in the wrong direction from the rest of the world.

I am not by any means anti-European. After all, Europe is a geographical expression. Therefore, being in the centre of Europe or supporting Europe is neither here nor there. The key is a European Community of nations

[Mr. Ian Duncan-Smith]

trading and co-operating through sovereign Parliaments. There is no other time but now. I have talked to many hon. Members who have said, "Don't worry, this matter will ultimately collapse; things will change and we will not have the problems."

If now is not the time to put the line in the sand and say, "Thus far and no further," when are we to say that? This matter has caused me great concern and problems early in the Parliament, but I hope in the next 24 hours to show where my true attitudes lie.

10.38 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): It is a pleasure to follow the new hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) and to congratulate him on an elegant, thoughtful and perceptive speech. Some might argue that he broke a convention because it is the convention not to be controversial in a maiden speech. Of course, he was not controversial because I agreed with everything that he said. The convention that a maiden speech should not be interrupted was maintained apart from my cries of "Hear, hear" and similar cries from the Conservative Benches.

The maiden speech of the new hon. Member for Chingford was very different from the kind of speeches that his predecessor used to make. He had a shrewder instinct for pressing an unwelcome knee to an unwelcoming groin. The performance of the new hon. Member for Chingford was more elegant and urbane and I am sure that the House looks forward to future performances from the hon. Gentleman of the same nature, particularly if he continues to take the same line of very cool Euro-scepticism. I congratulate him on that.

I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Chingford should be introduced to this place in tonight's debate on European matters. It is difficult to think of a political entity that has been created in a more shambolic and, in a sense, more deceitful way than the European institutions. Those institutions did not follow revolutions and they were not built by popular acclamation. They did not emerge from chaos and war. Instead, the European institutions are an amorphous entity, growing like a great swelling amoeba without popular consent. They are carried through by bamboozlement and imposed on the people. The people are not consulted.

The Bill will receive a Second Reading by what amounts to a species of deceit, because we are not considering the real issues. The Bill will not make progress because the people want it to or because the argument has been won. It will receive its Second Reading because the Opposition will abstain.

That process of bamboozlement is implicit in the nature of an institution in which the nations that form it cannot agree on what they want or what they want to build. Those nations cannot and do not consult the people about what they want because the issues are never presented in a clear-cut fashion. Those nations cannot build on the existing foundations because they are deadlocked by vested interests such as the common agricultural policy. One cannot make a palace out of a cowshed.

Instead, there is a process of building from the top down. With regard to the Maastricht treaty, we will unleash economic forces that will subject Europe to a common economic misery under a dominant German economy. We are going down that road because, in practice, all the other avenues for the advancement of European unity have been blocked. So they have the temerity to withhold consent.

In 1978, it seemed that the only road open was the path of monetary union that began with the exchange rate mechanism which, in the 1980s, turned the Common Market countries into the high-unemployment, low-growth blackspot of the advanced industrial world. The record then was worse than the record of this country in the 1980s with its disastrous monetary and economic policy. The European record was worse in terms of unemployment and growth.

We followed and became part of that mistake when the present Prime Minister bullied his shy, hesitant predecessor into entering the exchange rate mechanism in 1989. We entered at a crippling over-valued rate. We are now locked into an inescapable deflation because we cannot bring down interest rates as we are locked into the German economic cycle. Germany wants high interest rates, so we have to have them, too. Our interest rates should be half the current level if we are to have a recovery.

There cannot be recovery so long as we are locked into the exchange rate mechanism and are compelled to maintain high interest rates. By joining the exchange rate mechanism, we have achieved much the same as Churchill achived in 1925 when he took the pound back to the gold standard at an overvalued level. That was described very well in "The Economic Consequences of Mr. Churchill" by Keynes. The economic consequences of Mr. Major will be exactly the same.

We are going through the same process: industry has to cut costs, fire labour and throw overboard more research, design and development—everything that makes for competitiveness—just to survive and keep going. That is a finite future. That is the position that we are in now because at this stage in building European unity we need a futile gesture. We have made it. We have joined the exchange rate mechanism.

Now, in the treaty that we are debating, we are asked to take that gesture further by making it the first stage of economic and monetary union. In other words, we are making the process immutable and locking ourselves on the rails to a deflationary target. The treaty will lock a deflationary regime on the economies of Europe by requiring Governments to cut deficits, cut growth and get inflation down to abnormally low levels, destroying their manufacturing bases in the process.

The treaty is a deflationary charter because a national currency plays a vital role in national economic life. It is rather like the atmosphere round the planet. It sustains independent economic life. It protects the economy from shocks and abrasions from outside. If we tie, as we have tied, our currency to Germany, we shall import its economic trends. It will be the dominant economy. If we harden that into monetary union we shall throw away all the weapons of economic management that we need to rebuild British industry and solve the balance of payments problems.

It is odd that a Government who believe in free markets in every other respect do not believe in them in the one crucial area of the exchange rate when the consequences of not allowing the market to operate are serious. In a free market system, the pound would come down so that we could divert resources into our balance of payments and to

rebuild our manufacturing base. The market cannot now operate, because we have agreed to shackle ourselves to Germany.

By ratifying the treaty, we are embarking on hardening the monetarist obsession which is now dominant in the British economy. The treaty refers to

"the achievement of a high degree of price stability".

That is central to the whole treaty. There has never been an economic regime that was dedicated simply, solely and overwhelmingly to price stability. Under the gold standard, prices were not stable. The price of gold was stable, but other prices fluctuated around it. We have never had price stability. One can get it in a graveyard, but that is the only way. To dedicate the system to price stability dedicates it to deflation.

The problem is not now inflation. Any fool can bring down inflation simply by putting so many people out of work that it falls to zero. The problem is unemployment, underused resources, the growth that we are throwing away and the waste of the nation's economic time and future. What happens when inflation is zero? There is no natural regenerative process which will suddenly produce growth. The Government constantly tell us that they are producing the conditions for growth. What will produce the growth when inflation gets down to zero? At the present exchange rate and interest rate, there is nothing that can produce economic growth and revival. We are chaining ourselves to a futility.

Mrs. Currie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Can I ask my hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]* Who is my hon. Friend giving way to?

Mr. Mitchell: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Robertson: It might have been better to give way to the hon. Lady. Purely out of interest, has my hon. Friend found any industrialist of any significance in Britain who argues for the floating exchange rates to which he refers?

Mr. Mitchell: I have met many industrialists who have argued for more competitive exchange rates and lower interest rates, which are not possible if we are tied into the exchange rate mechanism at DM2.95. I have met many who have argued for stability in exchange rates, but stability helps importers as well as exporters. As we import more than we export, the main benefits of stability go overseas. Industry wants and needs a competitive exchange rate. That is the answer to my hon. Friend.

Mrs. Currie: I think that I heard the hon. Gentleman argue that, if we have zero inflation, there is no possibility of growth. If that is the economic policy of the Back Benches of the Labour party, he is talking absolute economic nonsense. If he suggested that to a business such as Toyota in my constituency—which aims to have zero price inflation and to generate growth through increasing productivity year by year—it would also say that he was talking economic nonsense.

Mr. Mitchell: I am sorry that I gave way to the hon. Lady because her intervention was nonsense. I did not say what she claimed I said. I asked what would produce economic growth when we got down to zero inflation. What are the dynamic forces that lead inevitably to produce growth, when the Government say that they are producing the climate for it, at the present exchange rate and interest rates, even with zero inflation? That was my point and I am sorry that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) did not understand it, but I can make it again and she will be hearing more from me about it.

Mrs. Currie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mitchell: No, that is enough for the moment.

All too often Labour Members say what we want out of Europe—the treaty of Maastricht that we would like, the economic regime that we would like. We would like a central bank controlled by peasants and workers; we would like a redistribution system; we would like a symmetrical system of obligations. We accept the treaty, on the basis of what we would like, and hope to change it in our direction, but the treaty is clearly defined. It is hard and fast. It is a deflationary regime and it will not be changed. There will not be a central bank that can be controlled—in fact, it has been laid down that it cannot be controlled or interfered with by politicians. There will be no system of redistribution because it is not implicit in the treaty and Germany certainly will not pay for it. If there is an adhesion fund, it will go to the poorer Mediterranean states, not to the poorer regions of this country.

We are saying, "Let us accept the treaty on the basis of total myths." The reality is a monetarist regime that will impose the same sort of deflation that we faced in the 1920s, controlled by central bankers and untouched by democratic controls or influence.

A central objective of the Labour party has always been to put the power of money at the disposal of the people —surely that is what we are about—and to place popular control over economic forces and the power of money. Yet through the treaty we will hand back that independence to the central banks—to monetary power.

Socialism is about using the power of money for the people, about stimulating growth. It is still as Crosland described it. It is still about economic growth, full employment and well-being. We cannot achieve any of that in a deflationary regime that is cutting production, increasing unemployment, increasing Government deficits and imposing a crippling burden of taxation merely to keep benefits at the present inadequate level. That is the object of deflation.

If this regime goes ahead, if a monetarist regime is fixed on Europe, the people will demonstrate an increasing frustration because their vote will count for nothing. They will be facing rising unemployment, economic difficulties, bankruptcies, liquidations and cuts in Government spending—all are implicit in the deflationary regime—and their votes will count for nothing, because the regime is imposed externally by monetary union and the exchange rate mechanism, which the politicians cannot control, influence or change.

In that situation, politics will turn sour. People unable to influence politicians, unable to reduce unemployment through political action, unable to use the power of democratic government over the power of money, will turn against immigrants, each other and everything that is better, altruistic and good in our society. There will be sourness. As the cake contracts, people will compete more bitterly and more fiercely for a share of that shrinking cake. That is not the sort of society that I am in politics to build. I am not in politics to make Europe fit to be ruled by central bankers, uncontrolled by the democratic power of the people.

[Mr. Mitchell]

I conclude with a brief quotation that sums up my feelings exactly:

"We must challenge the despair and defeatism of deflation with renewal, regeneration and recovery. We must welcone the efforts of any government to reflate its national economy and to expand its trade. And thus our aim is to weaken the restrictions of Community institutions that enforce compliance with monetarist economic policy . . . We do not breed understanding and mutuality between peoples through the EEC we now have. We breed hostilities through policies which, although masked by the grandeur of fine phrases, are operated by remote, bureaucratic institutions and impose disadvantages on producers and consumers throughout the EEC countries."

That is what Neil Kinnock said in 1984.

10.55 pm

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerton and Frome): I rise with some trepidation having heard some eloquent contributions, but this is the first opportunity that I have had to speak in the House for five years. I return here to represent the beautiful constituency of Somertom and Frome, which has all the charm and characteristics of rural Somerset and a great display of historic churches in whichever village one cares to visit. The constituency has not been immune to the difficulties of the recession or the problems that face the rural community.

I should like to digress for a moment and put on record the depth of feeling that I have for my former constituency of Newport, West and its people. The past 10 years have been a period of regeneration for south Wales and for Newport. It has been a success story, but with some mixed fortunes along the route. I now represent Somerton and Frome. That has been a life-long ambition because I was born and grew up in Somerset and I have always wanted to represent it in Parliament.

I pay great tribute to my predecessor, the honourable Robert Boscawen, who served in the House for nearly 22 years. His contribution was recognised again and again on the doorstep in the election campaign, when I met people whom he had managed to help in one way or another across the length and breadth of the constituency.

Bob Boscawen was also extremely well known in the House. He served in the Whips Office for well nigh 15 years and he was well versed in the murky waters of the usual channels. I know the esteem with which he is held in the House and we all wish him well in his retirement.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) on his excellent, eloquent maiden speech. The return speech is no maiden, so I am not bound by any constraint to steer away from controversy—not that that precedent is necessarily being followed. The only comment I have—it might be applicable to several speeches that I have heard—is that there may be an element of divergence between what I have to say and what has been said by others.

The treaty that we are discussing is the work and success of my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. It is the result of skilled and difficult negotiation —a negotiation that has already been approved by the House. I do not see that anything has changed between the time the House approved that negotiation and now, when we are debating the treaty. I hope that, after all the words, the House will approve overwhelmingly the Bill that endorses the treaty.

That is not to presuppose that the Maastricht treaty does not raise important issues—of course it does, and many of them have been aired tonight. It is and will be neither the beginning nor the end of the debate about the development of the European Community. That debate will continue in this place and well beyond it for many years because the process of institution building in Europe has always been, and always will be, consensual. That has been the key to progress in the past 20 years, just as it will be henceforth. Rapid acceleration, which some of our colleagues on the continent want, would be a dangerous course to pursue at this stage. I urge caution on those who, flushed with the heady wine of Maastricht, think that the agreements that have been reached can be moved forward rapidly in the next few months.

In urging a moderate pace, I do not argue that we should move as slowly as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) would like. Far from it. Rather, I echo the sentiments expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), because the outstanding priority now is to work to complete the single market. That is what business men in my constituency, both those who trade in Europe and those who have plans to trade in the wider European market, want to see achieved.

In the months ahead, we must also deal with vital issues connected with reforming the common agricultural policy, which is important to farmers in my constituency. They too are business men and strongly believe that they deserve an opportunity to compete on a more even playing field.

Maastricht has given us an opportunity to tackle those issues, not to go off—as some wish—towards a Euro Disney fantasy world. The European Community should be seen as a family of nations. That is precisely what it is and what it will inevitably grow into, which is why there is no reason to delay the accession of Austria and the other EFTA countries into the EC beyond the period that has now been set. The newly emergent nations of eastern Europe must not be made to feel that the removal of the iron curtain has been replaced by a tariff curtain. The countries of western Europe owe it to those countries to make them feel that they have a place in a democratic and capitalist Europe.

The notion of perfect harmony first and expansion later is dangerous, for if it is pursued it will divide Europe unto itself. Edmund Burke said in a letter to the sheriff of Bristol:

"Between craft and credulity the voice of reason is stifled."

We must ensure that that does not happen as we seek to develop the European Community in the next few years.

The Community needs to grow up as well as out, which is why it is so important to tackle the definition of "subsidiarity", as the treaty starts to do. I attended a conference in Europe called purely to discuss this. We are all using the word frequently, but it is an ugly word in the English language and has a different meaning, depending on which nationality one is talking to.

That is why it is so important that the Maastricht treaty has put the definition of "subsidiarity" right at the top of the agenda. After all, it should be about pushing down to nation states decisions that have, in certain circumstances, been taken from them. At the same time, certain other decisions are given up to Europe. Those are in the process

of discussion and include the negotiation of a single currency, which is clearly highlighted in the treaty. My right hon. Friends have wisely succeeded in the negotiations securing the right for this House to decide at a later date whether we should move to a single currency.

European institutions require democratic accountability, and we must never lose sight of that. I believe that the treaty takes a step in that direction as it gives additional powers to the European Parliament, but it is a timid step. That issue will come to the fore in future negotiations, of that I am absolutely certain.

If we give our people the impression that they are being governed by unelected bureaucrats from Brussels, we will create and store up future dangers for the Community's development due to the political forces that will be unleashed. If we act sensibly and make further progress and development, those forces will be contained.

The most important challenge facing the Government is the British presidency over the next six months which can set the tone for the European Community to move forward in a steady, cautious and consensual fashion. I have no doubt that, under the leadership of my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary during the next six months, that is precisely the course that will be taken.

11.6 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): I congratulate the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) on his maiden speech. I hope that he will take it as a compliment when I say that he looked and sounded as though he had been here for years. I am sure that he will soon be fitted with his own leather jacket.

Perhaps I have the easiest task of any new hon. Member in paying proper tribute to my predecessor. Frank Haynes was popular in all parts of the House because of his genuine friendliness and good humour, his commitment to a range of good causes—from local hospitals to the fortunes of Sutton Town football club. He was popular with political friends and opponents alike.

Had I needed any convincing of that, it was confirmed recently when, with characteristic generosity, he agreed to help me to show a constituency school party round the Palace of Westminster. He has a formidable reputation as a tour guide and the Kirkby Woodhouse school party was not disappointed. As we made our way round the Palace it was clear that we were in the presence of a star. Wherever we went we met people who would stop and congratulate Frank and wish him well for the future. Everyone from police officers to Members of the House of Lords had a good word for him.

Frank's popularity is reflected in the constituency of Ashfield. There cannot be an organisation, group, club or society of which Frank is not a member or which he has not helped in some way over the years. I say that with some confidence as, since my election, representatives from them have all written to me asking me to carry on the traditions that Frank established. Frank's talent and obvious popularity are based on the sheer force of his personality and the sheer volume of his voice.

Frank had one quality that I believe has not been given proper attention: his considerable political skills which have perhaps been overlooked. He won Ashfield after arguably one of the worst by-elections in Labour party history. He held Ashfield for the Labour party in some extraordinarily difficult circumstances in Nottingham. He was greatly assisted in that by the wisdom and experience of his agents, Clarrie Booler and Bryan Denham.

In 1979, Frank replaced the current hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), who might like to know that he still has at least one supporter in Ashfield. In the dying days of the general election campaign, I knocked on the door of the house of an elderly lady, who kindly invited me in and asked why I had taken so long to get round to see her. Like any candidate anxious to win votes and influence people, I politely explained that it was a big constituency and it took a little time to get around. "Tim Smith," she said, "called on everyone." In my candidate's mode, I still more politely pointed out that there were 75,000 electors in Ashfield and I could not see how he could have met them all. "Of course he did," she said, "regularly."

My candidate's charm school smile was wearing a little thin by the time she asked me what I had to say for myself. I launched into the two-minute version of the Labour party manifesto, trying to steer the conversation in the direction of her voting intentions. "Oh, don't worry about that," she said. "I have already voted by post." I now know what is the political equivalent of the blind man in a dark room looking for a dark cat. It is a Labour candidate canvassing a Tory lady who has already voted by post.

In making my preparations for this speech, I realised that the last three people to represent Ashfield now belong to three different political parties. David Marquand left Ashfield for a career in the European Commission. By contrast, I shall be leaving the European Parliament to concentrate on the constituency of Ashfield. He made his maiden speech in 1966, when he was able to state that mining was the linchpin of the economy of Ashfield. He went on to say, however:

"the coal mining industry of"

Nottinghamshire

"faces a grave crisis of confidence."—[*Official Report*, 5 May 1966; Vol. 727, c. 1965.]

He argued that it was urgently necessary to work out a comprehensive fuel programme in order to be able to assure the miners of the east midlands about their future for a long time to come.

These words have echoed down the years. There has been a massive reduction in the number of local collieries. I expect to represent Ashfield when its last colliery closes. That will be a sad day for the local community and it presents a bleak prospect for young people, who will also face difficulties finding work in Ashfield's other great industry, the textile trade.

From 1955, Ashfield was represented by Will Warbey. He had first been elected to the House to represent Luton in 1945. On 23 August 1945, in his maiden speech, he used words which are of particular relevance to today's debate:

"absolute national sovereignty is now an out-dated factor in international affairs."

He quoted the right hon. Member for Woodford, Winston Churchill, who had talked of the mixing of the nations, and went on:

"I believe there is a great opportunity in the future for nation States to get more mixed together, especially in their economic functions. We have a particularly excellent opportunity in the case of those nations in the north and west of Europe, and I include our own, which, I am glad to say, have now very largely a common political outlook, and which are intending to pursue similar policies of planning for full employment and for raising standards of living. We can get

[Mr. Geoffrey Hoon]

together and plan very largely in common in order to achieve those objectives."—[*Official Report*, 23 August 1945; Vol. 413, c. 898.]

That was what the House was discussing in August 1945, and in essence it is what this debate should be about.

The Members meeting in Parliament in 1945 were determined to end the divisions of Europe based on the extreme nationalism that had caused two catastrophic world wars. Like many others in a similar situation, my father volunteered to fight in the second world war on his 18th birthday. When he came to Strasbourg shortly after my election to the European Parliament, he said how much better what I was doing was than what he and millions of others had had to do in the second world war.

We now have to build on the European foundations established by previous generations. Although the Maastricht treaty is a far from perfect addition to the European building, it contains much that will contribute to the mixing of nations. Others have already criticised Britain's opt-out on economic and monetary union and on the social chapter. Since I am still a member of the European Parliament I want to concentrate my remarks on the institutional aspects of the treaty and to express my regret at the timid steps taken towards real democracy in the decision-making processes of the European Community.

Too often we have heard Ministers complain about decisions taken in Brussels as if they had played no part in the process or had no responsibility for the failure to hold the European Commission properly to account. The same Ministers were responsible for the intergovernmental negotiations that led to the treaty. If Brussels is to blame, so are the Ministers who have failed to reform the treaty to control the Commission and to make it answerable to those who have been directly elected to represent the people of Europe. Those representatives sit in national Parliaments and in the European Parliament.

Members of all the Parliaments of Europe should be working together more closely to improve the democracy of the European Community. We could start by considering how to improve the working relationship between Members of this House and British Members of the European Parliament. There remains an uneasy tension between those two democratically elected institutions which, in a European context, should be following a common purpose—the proposing, amending and approving of European legislation as well as holding the European Executive to account.

The uneasy relationship exists in spite of the fact that in the present House of Commons, 62 hon. Members have experience of one or more of the European institutions. Thirty of my new colleagues have been members of the European Parliament, directly elected or appointed like our Speaker, and 32 have been members of the Council of Europe.

The uneasy relationship allows the European Commission—the least democratic of the Community's institutions—to assert a disproportionate influence over legislation. During the debate on the Single European Act, it was suggested in Britain that the treaty changes then being debated marked a final shift of power from Westminster to the European Parliament.

In practice, the European Commission has significantly increased its power over legislation because of its ability to determine which amendments to propose during the various stages of the legislative process. In effect, it has been able to play off the European Parliament against the Council of Ministers, telling the Council that the European Parliament would not accept certain amendments and, in turn, telling the Parliament that it could not propose Parliament's amendments to the Council because they would be rejected. As a result, the Commission's policy line has been strengthened at the expense of the democratically elected Parliament and Council.

Certain measures in the Maastricht treaty will undoubtedly tilt the institutional balance slightly in the direction of the European Parliament. It will do little, however, to make the European Commission subject to democratic control. Similarly, the decisions of the Council of Ministers, meeting in secret, are rarely subject to democratic scrutiny. The Maastricht treaty will do little to improve the ability of elected Members of national Parliaments to oversee the activities of Ministers meeting in council.

Much of the debate so far has concentrated on criticisms of the present operation of the European Community. I share some of the criticisms, but I disagree strongly about the appropriate solutions. If the European Community overrides democracy, the solution is to make it more democratic.

I am grateful for the House's attention.

11.17 pm

Sir George Gardiner (Reigate): We have been treated to some very eloquent maiden speeches, and may I be the first Conservative Member to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) on a maiden speech of considerable intellectual content. I am sure that we all appreciated his tribute to his predecessor, Norman Tebbit, and to Margaret Tebbit, both of whom suffered so much from terrorist outrage. Like his predecessor, my hon. Friend did not eschew controversy, and we hope to hear much more from him in the future.

I also congratulate the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) on an entertaining and interesting speech. I do not think that any of us who served in previous or earlier Parliaments will ever forget his predecessor, Frank Haynes. We appreciate what the hon. Gentleman had to say about Frank. He said that he had been enjoined to carry on the tradition established by Frank—he will have a hard job, but I am sure that in the end he will do so. I tell him only that he must develop the jabbing finger that Frank used to emphasise every point that he made to the House. We look forward to hearing further contributions from the hon. Gentleman.

I welcome back my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson). It was not a maiden speech but an eloquent relaunch, in which he paid proper tribute to his predecessor.

Over recent months, I have often been surprised at the references in the press to myself as a Euro-sceptic. Throughout the arguments of the 1960s and 1970s, I was a firm advocate of Britain's membership of the European Community, and I do not repent that now. If not a Euro-sceptic, I am no Euro-fanatic either. I think that it was the *Daily Mail* that coined the term Euro-pragmatist, and I am happy to accept that label.

It is as a Euro-pragmatist that I utter a few words of warning. The European ideal for which I fought in the 1960s and 1970s was a genuine and open, free-trade, outward-looking Community, or common market as we used to call it, with such common standards for goods and the provision of services as were necessary to ensure effective competition to the benefit of all our citizens. We looked forward to greater co-operation on matters of common concern such as pollution and control of the environment.

The common agricultural policy was nonsense, but many of us were prepared to accept it in order to achieve the greater aim. We were confident that such idiocies would in time compel reform. That was the European ideal for which many of us fought. It was never any part of that ideal that we should be drawn into some sort of federal structure. That possibility was expressly ruled out when the issue of Community membership was put to the British people in the 1975 referendum. Yet there are those in Europe, especially on the Commission, who are trying to force the Community step by step into a centralised federal straitjacket, despite all the lessons of recent history on the fate of such super-states with centralised control.

The idea of a free community of nations is under threat from two directions—from those who want to propel us into a centralised federal structure and from a bureaucracy in Brussels that often seems hell bent on accruing to itself still greater powers. Often the two come together.

When, in her famous Bruges speech, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher warned of federalist ambitions, she was derided by many of her critics. They claimed that she was conjuring up a demon that did not exist. The past 12 months have shown how perceptive her warnings then were.

It is a tribute to my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer that at Maastricht they succeeded in halting the progress of federalism, and in some respects reversing it. Their great achievement at Maastricht was to open up other avenues for effective co-operation between nation states outside the existing institutions and hence their bureaucracy. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in opening the debate, saw this as a change of direction, and I hope that he proves to be right.

It is worth recalling some of the ambitions that were expressed before the Maastricht negotiations. The federalists wanted our foreign policy to be decided by majority voting within the Council of Ministers, then passed to the Brussels Commission to implement. Instead, foreign policy will proceed on a unified basis only after all member states agree, with no role for the Commission or for the European Court.

The federalists, again, wanted our defence to be subordinated to the Council of Ministers and then implemented through the Western European Union. Instead, WEU will remain outside the Community institutions and fully compatible with NATO. The federalists also wanted a whole range of Home Office responsibilities to be decided by majority vote in Council and implemented by the Commission. Instead, a mechanism has been created for closer co-operation outside the institutions.

Most of all, the federalists wanted us to be bound by the social chapter, which would have allowed majority voting to determine our industrial relations law and other related matters. Instead, the other 11 states will implement those ideas through a protocol if they so wish, but Britain will be no part of it. Whether, in the end, the other 11 burden their economies with that albatross remains to be seen.

Maastricht was a disappointment all round for the federalists. However, they were halted but not defeated, and their hope is that the provisions on a single currency will bring economic, and hence political, federation into being in due course. I do not want to develop the arguments against that in what I hope will be a short speech, but I share the anxieties on that matter expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has done well to reserve the rights of this Parliament in that respect, but it remains a direction in which we would not wish this country—or, indeed, the remainder of the Community—to proceed. Thankfully, doubts are growing in a number of other Community countries.

We should congratulate the Government on what they achieved. They have shown how the Community can develop in ways other than by a steady drift towards a centrally controlled super-state—rightly described by Mrs. Thatcher as "yesterday's future". For Europeans, federalism is certainly a dated dogma.

Much still needs to be done to ensure that the Community develops as a community of nation states, where the principle of subsidiarity—on which much has been said this evening—is given real meaning, where the overweening ambitions of the Community are cut down to

[Sir George Gardiner]

size, and where institutional barriers are erected to deter other nation states of Europe to the north and to the east from joining.

I have no doubt that the Government will get their majority tomorrow night, or that they deserve it. However, the feeling of a great many on the Conservative Benches is that, although my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister deserves full credit for what he has achieved, there is anxiety that some provisions could present grave dangers in the years to come.

The shadow of federalism has already fallen across the free nation states of the Community. It must be the Government's objective to push it back at every stage and at every Council meeting, developing instead greater co-operation outside the bureaucratic institutions of Brussels. With that understanding, I wish the Government well and will have no hesitation in voting for the Bill.

11.29 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): We have listened to many thoughtful, constructive and powerful speeches tonight in what is clearly an important and vital debate on the Maastricht treaty. The hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) made an interesting and thoughtful speech when he set out possible scenarios as to the way in which various nationalist groups might view the Maastricht treaty.

The ultimate irony of this debate is that those of us who have been described as nationalists will go into the Lobby in support of the Maastricht treaty, and those described as unionists will go into the Lobby to vote against the treaty.

The Maastricht treaty marks a watershed in the process which leads to European union. In it we see the process by which power moves in two directions, away from the nation states to the European stage, but also downwards from the nation states to the nations and historic regions of our continent.

The removal of the federal concept in the original draft of the treaty and its replacement by the embodiment of the concept of subsidiarity cannot mask the fact that power is moving away from nation states to a European model on the one hand and to a decentralist approach on the other.

That interpretation of subsidiarity is well understood on mainland Europe, and in particular in those states that have a decentralist, federalist or regional structure of government. Decision-making is now seen to be working on three levels. That fact is inescapable, and the only thing that we must decide is at which level each decision should be taken.

That debate should have been reflected in our deliberations today, but I fear that the Government's careful balancing act and their own interpretation of subsidiarity will prevent that debate from being heard.

My party believes in the principle of greater European integration as well as the economic and social necessity which drives that process on. We in Wales have nothing to fear from that concept embodied in the treaty, which says that we move towards an ever closer union amongst the peoples of Europe.

Our whole culture, our historical perspective, has been at the heart of Europe over many generations. Welsh literature, in its written and oral traditions, derives much of its influence from mainland Europe. Even today, Welsh youth culture and popular television culture through the television channel S4C is reaching out and conquering new markets on the European scene. The Welsh are a bilingual multicultural nation which can live side by side with the multilingual culture which predominates in Europe.

We also recognise that our economic future is linked to that of Europe. The truth of that statement appears in sharp focus in my constituency. For example, the link between Dublin and Holyhead linking two member states is an important European link to be seen not only in its localised context but in the wider context.

Despite its poor timing, the decision to enter the exchange rate mechanism gives the necessary discipline to ensure economic progress and to ensure that it is not marred by what I would describe as artificial stimuli to a stagnant economy. It will also give the business community greater stability and allow it to plan ahead with more certainty.

However, the drive towards monetary union has a downside. The greatest danger lies in the failure of the wealthy centre to acknowledge the fragility of peripheral economies. We must counter-balance the risk of wealth being sucked to the centre, with measures that buttress economies at the periphery of Europe. Wales urgently needs to see the Community's regional and social policies strengthened, which is why we argued so strongly against the Government's stance on additionality—when millions of pounds were locked into the system because of Government intransigence and Treasury rules; millions of pounds that are now flowing into the rural and former coal-mining areas of Wales, where they are much needed.

The anomalies inherent in the current regional funds criteria for objective status must be removed. It is nonsense that the whole of Ireland—north and south—qualifies for higher objective status than Wales, simply because we are treated as part of the United Kingdom for that purpose. If Wales were treated as a single entity, it would qualify for higher status.

We are also critical of the Government's refusal to accept the social chapter. If European union as envisaged at Maastricht is to be successful, workers and their families must be satisfied that their rights are fully protected. Refusal to adopt the social chapter would protect European workers against exploitation, by controlling their hours of work and providing minimum levels of job security, while workers in Wales and other parts of the United Kingdom would lose out.

We welcome the establishment of the Committee of the Regions, but the Government's interpretation of subsidiarity in relation to the committee is totally untenable. For Cabinet Ministers to claim that they have the right to attend the Council of Ministers to represent the Government and also the Committee of the Regions is profoundly undemocratic and absurd.

The treaty says that those who attend the committee should represent the areas that send them. How could the Secretary of State for Wales be said to represent us in the Committee of the Regions? He is unrepresentative of the political situation in Wales, and represents a minority party in Wales. The Government should think again, and revert to the treaty's original wording, so that those who attend the Committee of the Regions are elected by the region or nation that sends them. The principle of subsidiarity as enshrined in the treaty would then be fully protected—as it will be in Spain and Germany, and elsewhere.

Wales belongs at the heart of Europe, but it is currently denied the right to play a full part in the Community's institutions. Until she can, Wales will not be able to play a constructive role and to make a valuable contribution —as she will—to the economic, social, cultural, political and other developments that are set out in the Maastricht treaty.

In time, as the Community develops according to a decentralist model, the case for a Welsh Parliament will be unanswerable; and I hope that, in time, the House will recognise that too.

11.39 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I am extremely grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to catch your eye. Some little time ago—on 27 April, to be precise—I found it very difficult to do so. I had brought my harp to the party, as had my right hon. Friends, but we were not called on to play. As a fully-paid-up member of the harpists' section of the Pudsey musicians' union, I was deeply saddened by that.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), with his Irish harp, was eloquent. he had a velvet tone, and played with genius: it could well have been a great occasion. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who came, I suspect, with a Grecian harp—the lyre, which was brought from Crete by the first Saganauts, who started out from Worthing many years ago—could also have amused the House. As for me, I was unable to find a harp of suitable size. I came equipped only with something nicked from the Brighouse and Rastrick band—a two-stringed lute; but, even with that, we were unable to catch the eye of the master mariner, our right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir Edward Heath).

That, however, is all history. All that I wish you to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conveying my words to Madam Speaker—along with warm congratulations on her success —is to warn her that from time to time she must beware of master mariners, who wish to keep their hands on the Tiller; now, however, the master mariner from Sidcup has his own Garter—and long may he enjoy an award with which there is so great an affinity.

The Maastricht problem can be divided into three parts. First, I think that we all share some anxiety—I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, whom I am glad to see in the Chamber, feels it as well —about the extent to which the considerable progress that he and the Prime Minister have made in the recent discussions will genuinely lead to a fundamental shift in the understanding of what the British position may be in the future development of the Community; and, conversely, about how far the genuine shift in the Community will extend in its response to the British position.

Secondly, there is the question of the actual interpretation of the words that we find so important. The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) laid a fair amount of stress on additionality, which is one of the buzz words in relation to European activity. It is one of the words used by Her Majesty's Treasury when it wishes to reduce something, as opposed to adding to it.

I think that the hon. Gentleman has every reason to feel that that is an odd concept—although I am bound to say to him, and indeed to the House, that the new buzz word "subsidiarity" strikes me as equally capable of misinterpretation, from Montenegro to Moscow. It is an admirable thought that somewhere in Spain, or possibly in lower Saxony, people will be able to determine that subsidiarity means that the nation state is somehow enabled to make more individual decisions than it would otherwise. But then, as the word does not exist in the German or French languages, I suspect that it might be difficult to persuade our colleagues that that is indeed the case.

We have produced this settlement on the basis that there should be more devolution of decision making upon the nation states. One of the common threads running through our debate today is that, as much as possible, powers should continue to be devolved into this Parliament, where a decision-making process that is reflective of, and responsive to, popular opinion can be lodged. So long as that can be delivered, and made a constant and developed thread of Community decision making, there will be a wide measure of agreement that what was decided at Maastricht was the start of a wedge that will ultimately have a fundamental effect on Community structure.

Whatever the words may be, and whatever the interpretation of them, there is still a fundamental and cultural difference between what the majority of member states in the Community believe is right in practice, and what the majority believe is right in prospect. So many are so willing so often to sign up to the objective but so few, and with great infrequency, are able to deliver immediately the requirement of the law. Thus it is that my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have laid great stress on the point that, written into Maastricht, are provisions for fines on nation states that fail to implement the directives.

For heaven's sake! We have been obligated to do this, as have been all who are signatories to the Single European Act and members of the Community, for several decades. Now, we are coming to the conclusion that it is necessary, for the sake of comparability within our structures, to require the European Court to fine member states for non-implementation of treaty obligations entered into by them many years ago. That is a clear example of the cultural differences between us and others.

Our arguments today, as they always are, are on what is actually contained in the treaty. Clause by clause and line by line, phrase by phrase and word by word—the anxieties spill forth as we recognise that, if everything had to be implemented to the letter of the European Act, our freedom of action and our freedom to interpret what we consider to be in the rights of our national state would be devastated, with a corresponding effect on the willingness of our people to support the Act.

I do not believe that the Germans or the French are fussed. I do not believe that the Spaniards will suddenly decide no longer to support the Olympic games simply because there is some requirement to implement the water directive in Barcelona. I have no idea what they are doing about such measures. All I know is they take a fairly relaxed view of what comes through the tap, if anything. Still, they are able to continue as a nation state of the Community, to ride high in the reputation of the Community, to borrow, to beg or otherwise obtain resources from the Community for the betterment of the kingdom of Spain. All credit to them.

[Sir Giles Shaw]

All I say to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is that that is all very well, but if we have to pick up that little tab and say that it is now necessary to bring them to court for non-observance of directives that we have implemented ourselves, that will be a deeply saddening occasion.

I recall very well, as one of those in the engine room of this splendid Government in a previous year, having to take the lawn mower noise regulations through a Standing Committee, trying to relate them to the ice cream chimes regulations and sort them out with the other requirements on pollution control of the European Community. I lost the lawn mower regulations. I failed to realise that they could not be implemented because most of the lawn mowers in use in the United Kingdom could not be adapted to conform to them. Ardua ad acto was my motto. There are real difficulties over the interpretation of European legislation.

I am prepared to welcome and support this measure. However, I would add a word of hope and a word of conviction. I beg my hon. Friends who are sceptical about this process to remember that this Government have five years ahead of them. During that time, they will probably become the most senior Government within the European Community. The Government of the German Federal Republic are in considerable difficulties. The Government of France are fragmenting at the edges. The Government of Italy do not exist. During the next five years, therefore, the United Kingdom Government will probably be the most potent force in the argument over how the Community is to develop.

Furthermore, in my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary we have two of the most outstanding statesmen in the European Community. During the next five years, they are also likely to become the most senior statesmen in the Community. If that is so, this risk which we are invited to take will be worth taking. With such experienced hands at our disposal and with this Government's commitment at its back, the United Kingdom should be able not just to drive but to widen the wedge and to ensure that the shape, future, structure and effectiveness of the Community are radically altered in favour of the United Kingdom.

11.51 pm

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I intend to refer to my constituency of Stoke-on-Trent, South, but before doing so I offer my congratulations to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure that they will be among the many that you have already received. While I am in the congratulatory mode, every hon. Member will have noted that Stoke City beat Stockport County in the Autoglass Cup Final at Wembley on Saturday. We shall all want to congratulate the team on its victory. Even my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) will, I know, want to share in the congratulations.

The hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) referred in his eloquent maiden speech to the fact that his constituency was proud that the Spitfire had been developed in Eastleigh. He did not refer, although I am sure he intended to do so, to the fact that Reginald Mitchell was born in Stoke-on-Trent, South. All hon. Members will want to recognise that important event. He also said that his constituency is beautiful. I wish to register that claim for Stoke-on-Trent. Part of its beauty lies in its people. They have proud and long traditions, forged in the industrial and manufacturing history of the area.

We need no reminding of the fact that the pottery industry is renowned the world over for its unique skills and the quality of the product. One of the largest tyre manufacturers in Europe has its headquarters in Stoke-on-Trent. Engineering and the coal industry are also vital to the economic and social well-being of the area that I have the honour to represent. Unfortunately, all those industries have one sad feature in common—they have been seriously adversely affected by the continued recession. My constituents believe that the Government's response to such vital issues has been wholly inadequate. The inevitable result in my constituency—I do not claim any uniqueness in this matter—is that unemployment has massively increased. Last year, in general terms, unemployment was 49 per cent., and long-term unemployment—that is, those who have been out of work for 12 months—increased by more than twice the national average.

Right hon. and hon. Members will understand my concern when it appears that unemployment could not even get a mention in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech to the CBI last evening. On the same day as the Chancellor engaged in the debate on the Queen's Speech, the local press in my constituency carried headlines that announced further serious job losses. Employment prospects are not enhanced by the fact that the one remaining large colliery complex in my constituency which presently produces more than 2 million tonnes of coal and has massively increased its productivity over the past five years is now threatened by a systematic dismantling of the industry.

My constituents sent me to the House, among other reasons, to press for direct measures that will reverse the blight of unemployment. I pay tribute to the local authorities in my area which have made and are making determined efforts to attract investment and create jobs. Of course, that means a partnership between local authorities, the private sector and the Government. The President of the Board of Trade, in a previous incarnation as Secretary of State for the Environment, intervened and such a partnership was forged. A derelict site in Stoke-on-Trent was turned into the garden festival site and is now a thriving industrial area. We need such intervention. We should call on the President of the Board of Trade to intervene again so that future investment in my constituency can become a reality. We hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be allowed to intervene positively.

It is a great honour to represent the constituency of Stoke-on-Trent, South. Election to the House is a special event in all hon. Members' lives. Hon. Members are honoured to represent their constituents. It is a particularly special event for me because I have the honour of succeeding Jack Ashley. Faced with great adversity, Jack took on the challenge and triumphed. He served Stoke-on-Trent, South, the House and the country with great distinction for 26 years.

Jack and Pauline Ashley have set an example that continues to be an inspiration to us all. His values, including fighting discrimination, putting people first and tirelessly seeking economic and social justice, were

relevant to him during his time in the House. Perhaps those values are more relevant today than they have ever been.

I was grateful for Jack Ashley's inspiration when I considered the Bill. I agree entirely with right hon. and hon. Members who have said that this is probably one of the most important decisions that the House will be asked to make for some time.

It is difficult to find any inspiration in the Bill as it stands. It appears that the singular achievement that the Prime Minister is claiming is how quickly and under what conditions we can opt out of the basic and fundamental issues in current policy developments. The United Kingdom will be handed the presidency of the Council of Ministers in July. I understand that that occurs as a result of an alphabetical accident. It has nothing to do with any other consideration. In that respect, the phrase that I have heard used is "buggin's turn".

The presidency provides our Government with a unique opportunity to have real, positive influence over what is happening. It is a tragic irony that we will not be fully involved or at the heart of the positive progress that might benefit all our people. The preoccupation seems to be diktats of the market. I believe that the interests of the Community have been cynically dismissed.

The opt-out of the social chapter is a disgrace. There may be arguments about burdening industry. However, opting out of the social chapter holds out the prospect of serious disadvantage to millions of people in Britain. Opting out will widen the already wide gap between the economic and social conditions in many comparable Community states and the United Kingdom. It will officially establish the fact that we have a two-speed, two-tier Europe.

I wonder whether there are signs that the Government are buckling. The Secretary of State for Employment seems less certain—that is putting it mildly—about the Government's attitude to the current discussions in the Labour and Social Affairs Council. I believe that such uncertainty can be damaging. Contrary to Government propaganda, I believe that investors are deterred not by the social charter, but by the prevarication and uncertainty that surrounds the United Kingdom's attitude. Business and industry would welcome clear support for the social charter and a positive approach.

I want now to consider some of the institutional concerns which I am sure all hon. Members share. Obviously, some aspects of the Maastricht agreement, such as the extension of majority voting and increased involvement of the European Parliament, are welcome, but we should not fool ourselves. We are in danger of making the same mistakes as were made in 1986 when the inappropriately named Single European Act was forced through the House without real consideration of the necessary measures that would establish democratic accountability over the Commission and the secretive Council of Ministers.

Although I readily accept that some progress is being made in the Maastricht agreement with regard to accountability, that progress is six years too late. If we believe that marginal measures that will hardly affect the democratic deficit are going to be sufficient to address the serious problem and curb the increasing authority and power of the Commission, we delude ourselves. Perhaps in five or six years' time we will wonder why we did not insist on certain measures being adopted now. The Government should have acted accordingly in 1986.

We are not talking about transferring sovereignty from this House. We are concerned about making accountable what is happening now. Responsibility for the environment and health and safety matters have been transferred to the Community. The Government were willing and anxious to transfer all sorts of matters to the Community. But there is that gap, that democratic deficit, which means that the Commission, in its unaccountable way, can walk right through the middle. It continues to do so. I have heard enough in the debate today to satisfy myself that Conservative Members are as worried as Opposition Members about that vital issue.

The question that we must ask ourselves is whether the Bill even begins to address the democratic deficit. I believe that it does not. It certainly does not establish any basis for real democracy over a European Community that is increasingly dominated by an unaccountable Commission and a secretive Council of Ministers. The House should not support the Bill because it fails to meet the essential tests of democratic accountability, the interests of all the British people and putting the British Government at the heart of policy developments that are bound to have a dramatic effect on the future of all our people.

If the Bill is supported, it will work against the best interests of the vast majority of people in Britain. Most certainly, despite what we heard from the Prime MInister and others, it will hold out the prospect of marginalisation of the United Kingdom as policy developments take place in the European Community.

12.6 am

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): Thank you for calling me this evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I begin by congratulating you on your recent appointment to the Chair. I wish that you may have many years in that office. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson), who has just made a forceful and trenchant contribution to tonight's proceedings. I am sure that he will make a worthy successor to Mr. Jack Ashley in that seat.

Several fine maiden speeches have been made this evening. It was with increasing trepidation that I sat here and waited to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The quality, fluency and style of the maiden speakers who preceded me only increased my terror. I was delighted to hear from the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope) about his predecessor but one, Mr. Arthur Davidson. Following his departure from the House, he became the legal manager of Associated Newspapers Group, the publishers of *The Mail on Sunday* and the *Daily Mail*. As a libel lawyer and a member of the defamation bar, I have been helped in no small way by him to make my way in the world.

I was also delighted to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) speak with such confidence—a confidence which I cannot claim—when he spoke without notes and with such enthusiasm. Then we had the brave speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith), which I am sure will be remembered for many years to come.

The Harborough constituency which I have the honour to represent stands at the very heart of England. It is justly

[Mr. Edward Garnier]

proud of its history, its towns and villages and its rolling countryside. The town of Market Harborough, in the south of my constituency, is aptly named. It was given its market by King Henry II in the 13th century. He also gave it the status of town. We still have the market, where sheep and cattle are traded to this day. I am afraid that it is soon to be covered by a supermarket. I am reliably informed that that is progress.

I hope that it will not be long before Market Harborough has a new agricultural market—perhaps just outside the town—so that the links between town and country can be maintained, to the advantage of both.

In 1381, 170 families were listed on the Market Harborough poll tax returns. In 1991, the equivalent list would have contained the names of more than 16,000 souls. I will not, however, pause to consider now the respective views of my constituents and their forebears on the question of local government finance.

The other main centre of population in the Harborough constituency is the borough of Oadby and Wigston, hard by the city of Leicester—fiercely proud that it is not a part of that city, and fiercely determined that it never will be. Oadby and Wigston has every right to be fierce and proud. It is the home of the Tigers—the Leicestershire regiment, which is now part of the Royal Anglian Regiment.

Elsewhere, Harborough is made up some of the finest country in England—undulating farmland, dotted with villages and hamlets, all of them vibrant communities, which play their part in giving the constituency its special identity and in contributing to its diversity. It is a farming constituency, but it also earns its living at home, in Europe and in the wider world, thanks to its textile, knitwear, hosiery and footwear industries, thanks to its engineering and financial services industries and, above all, thanks to the hard work, practical common sense and enterprise of its people.

I am sure that the House will understand that in the Harborough constituency we are looking forward to the reform of the common agricultural policy, which will surely come, and to the resolution of the current GATT round.

I respectfully adopt the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) concerning the powers of the European Parliament and its control of the CAP, and I trust that in due course progress will be made in that direction.

I am fortunate to be the Member for Harborough, but I feel equally sure that for the past 33 years Harborough has been fortunate in having Sir John Farr as its loyal and diligent Member of Parliament. I am sure that there are few hon. Members here today whose parliamentary memories go back as far as 1959. There will be fewer still, on both sides of the House, who know Sir John Farr and who do not remember him with affection and respect. Although recently troubled by ill health and in considerable pain, he never wavered in his duty to his constituents, and he always fought for them, regardless of their politics, with determination and vigour—qualities for which he is famous within the House as he was on the cricket field.

In his maiden speech in November 1959, John Farr warned of the dangers to the environment posed by the indiscriminate use of toxic agricultural sprays. He spoke as a countryman, and as a man with real knowledge of such matters. He spoke of the need to protect our fields, rivers, woods and hedgerows and of the need to protect bird life, insect life, fish life, and indeed mankind, from poisonous chemicals. The modern Green is way behind Sir John, for he was ahead of his time.

In espousing the not altogether popular cause of the Birmingham Six in recent years, he again showed that he was ahead of his time, and that he was fearless in the pursuit of justice for those who were in need of his help. I am happy to tell the House that Sir John is restored to good health and is enjoying an extremely active retirement.

I should like to add my small voice in support of ratification of the treaty of Maastricht. The time has come for us to lead and to shape the future of Europe. I suggest that that is best achieved by working the clay rather than by smashing the pot. We can no longer afford, politically or economically, to treat the European Community and our place in it as subjects unfit for polite society. We must use the Community, and use it unashamedly, to the advantage of our country and of our constituencies. That is certainly what the majority of my constituents want. They will not thank us for failing to complete what my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Chancellor set in hand in December.

On a lighter note, there are few sights more pleasing to my constituents than that of a Frenchman, German, Spaniard, Greek or Italian or any other mainland European decked out from top to toe in English clothes, preferably made in Leicestershire. The person inside those clothes should be well fed on a diet of Leicestershire meat and cheese. I want other Europeans to share that privilege, be they from Scandinavia, Austria or further east in Europe. They will not have that privilege if the Bill is not passed and we are sidetracked into fruitless and mind-numbing arguments by centrists across the channel.

I suggest that not to ratify now would unravel all that has been achieved at an intergovernmental level and outside the agencies of the Community. Not to ratify now would endanger our justifiably British approach to currency and monetary union, employment law, immigration policy, foreign policy and security, domestic and international. Not to ratify now would also endanger our links with the United States, which are dear to many of us here. Failure to ratify would undermine so much of what we have sought to underpin—our support of the doctrine of subsidiarity.

We stand for the transfer of power away from the centre to the nation states. In delegating power to Europe, as we must do occasionally, we do not abdicate it, but delegate it. We know a little about unravelling in my knitwear constituency—it is not a pretty sight. To pass the Bill is to ensure the orderly development of Europe and, what is more, to reinforce it with the authority of this ancient House.

12.18 am

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): First, I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. I have often seen you in the Chair in Committee, when you always acted with great fairness to all members of Committees.

If the hon. Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) had any fears that his nerves would show through, he

disabused us of any such impression. He did extremely well. I am sure that if Sir John Farr had been here, he would have been very proud of his successor. He represents a beautiful part of the country, of which he shows a keen awareness. He paid an excellent tribute to his predecessor, who had been a Member for a long time before I entered the House and who was greatly respected. I am sure that his successor will be heard many times in the future and I look forward to hearing what he has to say. He said that he was a good European and I am pleased to hear that, although we may have differences of opinion on exactly what a good European is or should be.

Everyone in this country today knows what the European Community is, even if he or she still uses the expression "Common Market". I cannot help but think back to a selection interview held in Liverpool for a parliamentary candidate. One of the people to be interviewed was a member of the markets committee of Liverpool city council. When asked what he thought of the Common Market, he looked up at the ceiling, then at the floor and about him, and said, "Well, I don't care where they put it, so long as it's not in Great Homer street."

No one misunderstands what we are talking about when we refer to the European Community. However, when we deal with the Maastricht treaty, we should do so against the background of what we believe is in our constituents' interests. On the doorsteps during the general election campaign, I heard not one suggestion—I doubt whether other hon. Members differ from me—that my constituents were worried about sovereignty. What really matters to us is our electors' sovereignty and what they want, which is a decent life, a decent chance for their children in education, a decent chance in health matters, and proper social and public services. If those are to be obtained through various layers of government, so be it. If Europe can provide the goods that my constituents want, that is fine by me.

There can be no doubt that the various functions of Government and Administration must be administered at different levels. Euro-sceptics exist on both sides of the House, although it is interesting to note that those Opposition Members who expressed scepticism on Europe tend, with one or two notable exceptions, to be conspicuous by their absence. They will doubtless read *Hansard* tomorrow and be converted to the view that we should now expect our country to play a full part in the Community.

I am astonished when I hear Conservative Members talk of centralisation. They also talk about subsidiarity. The hon. Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner) said that the highest form of subsidiarity was the nation state and that that was where we could expect all decisions to be taken. He said that it was the lowest level—the nearest to the electors—at which they could be taken. I find that absolutely astonishing, because the Government have defied all the principles of subsidiarity in this country.

There was a time when local authorities could bask in the sunshine of local self-government and democracy. It was the former Prime Minister—who now says that we should fear centralisation from Brussels—who abolished the Greater London council, Merseyside county council and all the metropolitan councils simply on the grounds that they were controlled by a party that opposed the one of which she was leader.

This Government have not sought to grant any subsidiarity in relation to the financial powers of local authorities. Alone in Europe, Britain's local councillors, whether good or bad, can be disqualified from office, not because they fail to win the electors' votes, but because they do not abide by the financial constraints placed upon them by a highly centralised Government. There can be no doubt that the most centralised state in Europe today is the United Kingdom, where the buck stops at 10 Downing street and Whitehall. If I were not a Member of the House, I would not rush to be a member of any of this country's councils, denuded as they are of power and control.

What pleases me about the treaty of Maastricht, which was signed by the Prime Minister, is that it refers to a committee of regions. God knows how the Government, who signed the treaty, will interpret the committee of regions, on which the United Kingdom is to have 24 members. I suspect that the Prime Minister thinks that he can ensure that those 24 members are like the bureaucrats—the placemen—that he has put on the hospital trusts that have been created under recent national health service legislation.

However, I have no doubt that the people of this country will be looking for proper representation of the regions in the corridors of power in the European Community institutions. I believe that, no matter how strongly the Conservative Government—alone of all Governments in Europe—resist the idea of regional government, democratic regional government will come, as the pressures for it exist in the Community.

When people in this country see that the citizens of Bavaria and the various regions of France and Italy have rights that they do not, I am sure that they will say that they want the same regional representation as those other countries. They will see that subsidiarity stops not at the nation state, but much lower down the scale, nearer to the elector—the consumer of services. I am sure that, irrespective of the wishes of the Tory Government, that is what will happen.

Furthermore, I believe that the Government will be forced to accept the social protocol. Of course they do not accept it now, and have put up various notions that the country will be strike-torn and there will be other industrial relations problems if the social protocol is accepted. But as my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said earlier today, if one reads the treaty—I wonder how many people have done so—and studies the social protocol, one will see that the last paragraph contains no reference to pay and conditions of negotiation. The treaty of Maastricht is not trying to control that aspect of industrial relations and its provisions do not cover strikes and lock-outs.

Any Member who says that the Maastricht treaty embraces the possibility of more militant industrial action in our factories and places of work is lying. Such ideas are merely the excuse that the Tory party used to attack the Labour party's support for the social protocol in the recent election. Most people do not know any better, but Members of this House should know better than to say such things.

There are certainly faults in the treaty, and I do not agree with everthing that it contains. Some aspects of it will have to be changed—and will be changed as they prove to be impracticable. I believe that the stricture that budget deficits may not exceed 3 per cent. of gross national product will prove impracticable—and not just in this

[Mr. Robert N. Wareing]

country. The British people will also continue to press the Government to ensure that we are not left behind in the move towards acceptance of the social charter.

As for the free movement of labour, given the mass unemployment in some of our regions, there is every reason to expect that many of the people whom we represent will soon be represented by deputies in the National Assembly or by members of the Bundestag, because they will move where the jobs are. As British workers move around Europe and discover that conditions in the Siemens factory in Munich are better than those in the GEC factory in Liverpool, word will get around. We want the same health and safety conditions in this country as workers abroad enjoy.

While the docks legislation was being pushed through the House I came across some Liverpool dockers in London who had just been to a meeting of the Transport and General Workers Union at Transport house. They said that they had been to Hamburg and discovered to their amazement that workers there were represented on the supervisory boards of the works in which they were employed. They had always thought that Britain enjoyed the best working conditions. In future, employers in Germany, France, Britain and Italy will find that they have to provide the same rights and conditions for their workers no matter which part of the Community they work in.

I strongly believe that we should support the Opposition amendment. We cannot oppose the treaty as such because that would send the wrong message to those who represent working people in the rest of the Community. Our sister parties throughout the EC will expect us not to give our blessing to everything in the treaty, but, with them, to try to correct some of the faults in it and to develop the Community to the point at which it will have the full support of all our people.

There are grave divisions in the Tory party and I know that there are some dissidents on the Opposition Benches, too. *[Laughter.]* I take the point. We do not have a Bruges group and we did not meet at the Carlton club. The Conservative party has a problem. It has a small majority and does not know what will happen when there is a new leader in another place.

Mr. Morgan: May I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the headline in today's *Financial Times*, which I just happen to have seen. The lead story is entitled "Major and Thatcher in clash over Maastricht" and has as the strapline "Whips' attempt to control feared revolt undermined". Would he care to comment on those two headlines?

Mr. Wareing: I thank my hon. Friend for those observations, which I enjoyed considerably because they are true. My hon. Friend will probably agree that the Prime Minister does not have the guts to make it clear to his predecessor that he is his own man. We shall no doubt hear in a few weeks' time that there is a new countess in another place. She certainly does not put the fear of God into me, but she would if I were a Tory because she will not keep her mouth shut if she gets to the other place. The great centraliser who is so critical of Jacques Delors and of those in the European Community who recognise the regions, who do not deny the people of their Scotlands and their Wales's equality of rights and even have them represented in the upper Chambers of their Parliaments, will be sent to the other place—that is where the biggest opponent of the Tory leadership within the Tory party will be.

There is a solution. If the Prime Minister wants to prove that he is his own man, especially on Europe, he should turn to Mrs. Thatcher and say, "So you want to be in the other place? No, no, no."

12.37 am

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): There was much to enjoy in the speech of the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing). We have become used to courageous speeches from him over the years, but for him to accuse the Tories of being split over Europe is at once perfectly obvious and completely inappropriate. The one thing that has been clear this evening is that there is a wide divergence of views among both parties, which is extremely healthy. The Government have a stance to recommend to the House and to Conservative Members, but on this issue more than most hon. Members will hold their own views and their own counsel. It is hardly surprising that there are splits within the parties.

What is more interesting than the party split is that we have often heard hon. Members analyse the issue and I have often accepted nearly all of the analysis only to disagree with the conclusion. I have in mind especially the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and the earlier speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). I found much of what they said extremely appealing. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford and I have trodden the European boards together and have certainly agreed about Europe.

The difficulty is that my right hon. and hon. Friends seem to start from the position in which they would like to be. In politics one cannot speak from the position in which one would like to be—one is stuck with one's real position. For example, I wish that we were not in Europe. I believe that 20 years ago we missed the golden opportunity not to go into Europe. I should have liked us to build our contacts with Australasia. I should not have wanted us to be anti-Europe but to have recognised that it had a culture and communality of interest and that we could co-operate with it but not be part of it.

If that had been our attitude to Europe in those days, it would have meant among other things that our farming, which matters greatly to many hon. Members, especially on the Conservative Benches, would now be thriving. It would be able to produce as much food as we could consume and for our surplus foods we would be able to look to Australasia. It would have meant a transformation of the fortunes of the United Kingdom over the past 20 years. I should have liked to be in that position, but that is a pipe dream and an "if" of history. The fact is that we went into the Common Market and that is where we are now.

In some speeches—by hon. Members on both sides of the House, but mainly from the Government Benches—there have been references to "the dangers", almost as if the debate was taking place 20 years ago and we were talking of the dangers of going into Europe. Whether we like it or like it not, we must face the fact that we are in Europe. We must say to ourselves, "Given where we are tonight, what is the best route to take and what is in the best interests of our constituents?"

I do not know how many hon. Members have read the treaty of Rome. I confess that I read it only about three years ago. I was going to Paris to make a speech and officials thoughtfully provided me with a copy of the treaty. It was quite an easy read and a short one at that. I then had more sympathy than ever before with some of the federalist aspirations of our European partners.

Anyone who reads the treaty realises at once the dangers that it has for us and the interpretation that will be placed upon it by our European partners. It reflects no credit on some that, when the arguments of the 1970s were taking place, we were told, "You need not worry because there are no federalist dangers or implications in it." Anyone who had read the treaty would have realised that there would be dangers for us.

Where do we go from there? I can understand the position—curiously, it has not been voiced tonight—of someone who says, "I don't want to be in Europe. I want to get out of Europe. I think that there is a viable possibility of being able to close the door on this era of our history and leave Europe." I think that that is completely unrealistic. As I said in an intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford, if I thought that there was a realistic, sane and sensible way, even now, in which we could pull out of Europe, it would be a drum that I would follow, but that route is not available to us.

Those who say that, however—if some of them crop up in the next 24 hours or so—are at least taking a position that is intellectually respectable. I do not know, but I suspect that when my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will sound that trumpet. He will say, "We should get out of Europe." Although I consider that to be a romantic view, I can see at once that it is attractive. It is completely unrealistic, but at least it is understandable.

I understand also the view of those such as my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). My hon. Friend has tremendous courage. He is prepared to stand before the House, to turn to the Conservative Benches and to say that he looks forward to a time when we have multi-member constituencies and proportional representation. He virtually genuflected the moment he even slightly criticised President Delors. That is the other side of the argument and it is logical as far as it goes.

I have difficulty in understanding the middle course. I do not understand how any of my hon. Friends can say, "Don't worry, dear boy. I am absolutely pro-European. I want to stay in Europe. My European credentials are fine but I don't accept the Maastricht deal. No, we must outlaw that. I am as good a European as the others but I am not going to go along with the Maastricht treaty."

What are my hon. Friends who say that trying to convey to the House? It is invidious to name names, even in terms of their constituencies, but are we supposed to believe that there is a body of opinion among Conservative Back-Bench Members that if they had been Ministers they could have gone to Maastricht and obtained a better deal than my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary?

I know that the Government Back Benches are full of talent. The amount of talent among ex-Ministers on our Back Benches is ferociously strong. I even exclude myself, however, when I say that I do not know of any colleague on the Back Benches, be he an ex-Minister or not, whom I could confidently have sent to Maastricht to get a better deal than the one with which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister returned. I do not understand the position of those who say that they are pro-European but who imply by saying that they will oppose the Maastricht treaty that a better deal was available, which my right hon Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary did not get. Frankly, that argument will not stack up in the end.

There are those who say that what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister obtained at Maastricht was an illusion, that there are still great federalist dangers, that there are still battles to be fought and that, at the next intergovernmental conference in 1996, the federalists will be out again. Of course they will, because there are some battles that can never finally be won. Surely in this House, of all places, we are used to that. Every time there is an election, we have to go out again and fight our political opponents and they have to fight us. We do not give up because there may be other battles to fight when we have to repel views with which we do not agree. Obviously, the federalists will be out again in 1996 and the same arguments will have to be won all over again. However, they have been won on this occasion, so why should it be any less likely that we will win again?

We should consider the context in which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister went to Maastricht. It is obvious that a number of our European partners had become so thoroughly sick of the British that in a sense they did not even consider their own interests. It was sufficient for them to give the Brits a bloody nose. In a very short time, our Prime Minister went to Europe, made alliances, got on with some countries, made deals with some countries and actually got over to the Europeans the fact that, although their precious treaty of Rome might have pointed in a federalist direction, there were other possibilities as well.

What has come out of Maastricht is not simply a full stop on the advance towards federalism; there has actually been an alternative vision, and of something that many of us thought we were going into Europe to do in the first place. It is not to move towards some final political union, not to become part of some wretched united states of Europe, but to have ever closer co-operation in our mutual interests. That is an alternative vision of Europe which we are now in a position to convey. It is surely a great deal more attractive that merely going to Europe and saying, "We don't want to play with you. We don't like your ideas or your vision. We have got nothing to say to you other than that we will not co-operate."

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), in a good and telling speech, said that it was his experience of the old co-opted European Parliament that we could not get anywhere in Europe with half measures. It simply does not work to stand on the European boundaries and howl that we do not want to play on their playground—they get on with the game without us. If we are not prepared to come out of Europe, we must stay and fight.

It is worth considering some of the things that have not been included in the Maastricht treaty. We will not be bound in foreign policy, home affairs, justice, defence, security and all the rest. All those will be dealt with by intergovernmental conferences. We know that the federalists in Europe will try, as they always do, to say that really those matters fall not under IGCs, but under an article of the treaty of Rome. That is the game that the

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Europeans play. That is the sort of people they are. They want to bring those matters within their ambit, so they will try to argue that they come under the treaty of Rome.

That battle must be fought—it has been fought before and it will be fought again. However, the mere fact that the federalists will not ultimately go away does not mean that we have to give up the ghost and not be prepared to take the argument to them.

We now have an opportunity in Europe that we have never had before. I have contacts with business men in Belgium who have been saying to me for years, "Why don't you Brits really get into the Common Market and give us a lead?" Some small countries in Europe do not like what they see of German and French behaviour. Those small countries take pride in their sovereignty every bit as much as we take pride in ours. They have been looking for a major country that will give them a lead and play a constructive part in Europe, without trying to turn it into a federalist super-state.

A number of references have already rightly been made to the fact that Germany is in one heck of a state at the moment. A great many Germans are now saying to themselves, "Do we really want to give up the deutschmark just so that we can have the ecu instead?" Reference has also been made to the fact that France has its problems.

If ever there was a time when Britain could put itself at the heart of Europe, take a lead and come up with an alternative vision which ultimately appeals to all, this is that opportunity. If we do not take it, we have no reason to believe that that opportunity will ever come again. It is all very well to flex one's patriotism over a few bottles of claret at the Carlton, but at the end of the day we must ask ourselves whether we can use Europe to our own advantage. The country expects better of us than posturing about where we would like to be. We have been given a unique opportunity by my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary.

As it is not realistic for us to leave the EC, we should take that opportunity and make a success of it. It is all very well to say that we wish that we had never joined—so do I, with all my heart—but we are in it, we cannot get out of it and we have a unique opportunity to make a success of it.

12.50 am

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): It is about 10 weeks since my predecesssor, Merlyn Rees, made his final speech to the House. In that speech, as in a number of others, he combined the experiences of his upbringing in a south Wales mining villages with his work in his Leeds inner-city political base. He spoke of the effects of unemployment in each of those areas and, as he often did. he showed the concern and anger with which he always faced the deprivation and poverty which were the consequences of that unemployment.

It was Merlyn's caring approach which characterised not only his work in the constituency but much of his work in the House and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I apologise for interrupting the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), but the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) should not bring refreshments into the Chamber.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is only water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It may be only water, but it is still liquid refreshment. Mr. Gunnell.

Mr. Gunnell: Hon. Members will agree that Merlyn carried his caring approach even to the highest offices of state. That was one reason why he was held in such respect and why, even though he has long ceased to be Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, he still carries with him the concerns of Northern Ireland and his knowledge of its people which was developed in those days.

Merlyn Rees served the Leeds, South constituency for 29 years, and for the last eight of those was also the Member of Parliament for the Morley area. He followed an equally distinguished predecessor in Hugh Gaitskell, who also had a long association with the constituency, in his case 26 years. But of those 26 years, the first eight were spent as a prospective parliamentary candidate because, although he was selected in 1937, he did not get to fight the seat until 1945.

Following two such distinguished predecessors is a daunting task, but I have had the advantage of sitting with Merlyn in his surgeries which he took with Colleen, his wife. They brought to those surgeries and to the people of south Leeds whom they met that sense of caring which meant that for many people the very act of telling their problems was in itself cathartic. They knew that he had taken those problems on board and that he would do what he could to sort them out.

Merlyn was undaunted by any problem. I well remember the end of one surgery when a man came in somewhat breathless to complain that a herd of cattle had escaped from grazing land on a former opencast site into council house gardens. What to do?—find the owner?, telephone the housing department?, explain that the matter did not fall within a Member of Parliament's remit? Merlyn did none of those. Instead, he took us up there in his car and in 10 minutes the cattle were back in place. But, of course, he had a great advantage because, as he was Home Secretary, he was always followed by some plainclothesmen and some members of the West Yorkshire constabulary, so he had plenty of people on hand to make sure that the job was done efficiently.

Merlyn was one of the last members of the last Parliament to announce that he was standing down. The way that news was greeted showed the regard in which he was held in the constituency. He received one honour that even the House could not bestow on him. He was almost embarrassed when, last November, the Yorkshire Society named him Yorkshireman of the year. After that accolade, it is easy to see how Sachin Tendulkar managed to get past Yorkshire county cricket club's committee.

My constituency is in two parts. Morley and South Leeds are geographically adjacent, but not even a direct bus service connects them. It is a marriage by the Boundaries Commission. I have worked in the south Leeds area since 1975, and know well the people there. The area comprises part of the great industrial centre that built the city's economy. It is one of traditional industry. The world's oldest railway—the 1758 Middleton railway—is in my ward and constituency.

The housing and the tight communities that Richard Hoggart reminisced about have gone. Their place has been taken by new estates, some of which are themselves rapidly falling into decline.

Morley is very different. An independent West Riding borough built on the traditional industries of textiles and mining that have long departed, reluctantly, in 1972, found itself forming part of Leeds. Even today, according to a local newspaper poll, 27 per cent. of Morley's residents want its independence from the city—but that is a minority.

Housing, employment, and planning issues are all of concern to the people of Morley, which faces the prospect of applications for opencasting. Its residents are concerned that the green belt that divides the two halves of my constituency is being eroded by further development. We hope that it will be limited—not least because the homes that are being built are not of the kind needed by many of my constituents. Mine is a constituency of change, and one having considerable needs.

My work as a local government representative in a number of offices has affected my thinking on Europe, and that is pertinent to tonight's debate. For the past 11 years, I have served as chairman of the Yorkshire and Humberside development association—one of the regional development bodies supported by the Department of Trade and Industry to attract inward investment from overseas.

My first few years in that office were frustrating, because few companies came to the region. In recent years, however, there have been a series of investors from Europe, the United States, and Japan—primarily because of the potential European market. It is clear that this country's success in attracting inward investment owes much to its involvement in the Community. Especially in an area such as mine, dominated by Labour-held constituencies, the support given by both major parties for the Community has made it that much easier to attract investment from Japanese and American companies, and we have seen a number of significant developments.

I must add, however, that I do not share the view expressed by some Conservative Members that overseas investors will be put off if the social chapter is accepted. I have worked actively with three Japanese companies that have invested in my area, and my impression is that they want to give their work forces a good deal. They may insist on single-union agreements, but within those agreements they are willing to give their work forces conditions that are often not granted by British companies.

The standard of management in those Japanese companies is an example to many of the indigenous firms in my region, and is accepted as such. Employees of such companies as Pioneer—which has recently settled in Wakefield—or Citizen, in Scunthorpe, say that they value their jobs and are proud to have them. I do not believe that accepting the social chapter would mean turning away companies that continue to be interested in investing in this country. Even now, a number of companies are visiting our region, and we hope for additional investment.

Some have suggested that the south bank of the Humber should be separated from the north bank, and that Humberside should be split up. That would do nothing for the economy of the region. The companies that we consulted made it clear that what interested them about the Yorkshire and Humberside region was the through route to Europe through the European ports: they are locating on or near the motorway sites, so that they can not only make direct use of the traffic through to the rest of the United Kingdom market but ensure that they have direct access to northern Europe. That is a very important link.

I have been involved with the Assembly of European Regions; indeed, as leader of West Yorkshire metropolitan county council, I was the only English person present when it was formed. Since then, I have acted as an adviser to the assembly, and have been the only English person present at bureau meetings. I have seen the organisation involve regions not only from within the Community but from eastern Europe: they are part of it. I have seen it develop on the strength of the German länder and the Italian and Spanish regions, and I have seen it press for a senate of the regions. The Maastricht proposal for a Committee of the Regions is a not dissimilar idea. With 184 members, it is unlikely to be such an effective committee, but it would nevertheless constitute the first official recognition of the significance of regions.

Much has been said today about the principle of subsidiarity. When that principle is applied, although the 24 United Kingdom representatives will no doubt have been nominated by the United Kingdom Government, it will be important for them to be acceptable and to represent their regions. Yorkshire and Humberside must have two representatives, and the nominees must be elected within the regions concerned. They must have a proper democratic remit in those regions. The idea that Scotland and Wales—whose representatives attended the recent conference of the Assembly of European Regions in Mannheim—could be represented by Members of Parliament who are not elected from the regions strikes most of the European countries with which we are associated as unthinkable. If we go down that route, we shall certainly not be fulfilling the principle of subsidiarity.

Thirdly, I have been involved in the North of England Regional Consortium, of which I have been the chairman since it started. We have argued the northern case—for example, for links to the channel tunnel. The Government must ensure that any benefits that come from the single market, and any economic benefits that they believe will come from the signing of this treaty, are benefits for the nation as a whole, not just for the south-east. For eight years, we have been fighting for proper links with the channel tunnel for the three northern regions, and I am still dissatisfied with British Rail's proposals.

Because of the rules laid down by the House under section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, those proposals would not give my constituency even a second-class service, because it is in West Yorkshire. Market forces alone will not provide links to the north. If there are benefits from membership of the Community —what I have said shows that I think there are—they must be shared by the nation as a whole. That is the Government's responsibility, and as matters proceed, they must attend to that responsibility.

1.6 am

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): It is a great privilege for me to take part in the debate, for two reasons. The first is that this is obviously an important debate, but the second is that my road to Westminster has been a long and bumpy one. Having failed in two safe Labour seats—Swansea, West in 1987 and Pontypridd in 1989—I used my

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considerable experience to lose the 13th safest Conservative seat in 1991, in Ribble Valley. Three new Evanses entered the House at this election, and I am proud to say that I am the only one to represent a valley constituency.

Ribble Valley became famous last year for the sporting political event of the by-election. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Michael Carr, the former Member of Parliament for Ribble Valley, who looked as surprised on the night of 7 March that he had won as I looked shocked that I had lost. I am sure that all hon. Members will agree that he was an asset to Ribble Valley as Member of Parliament. He was well-liked and respected in the House, and he won the respect of his constituents.

Michael Carr succeeded David Waddington, now known as Lord Waddington of Read. Lord Waddington won two by-elections. First, he won Nelson and Colne after the sad death of the great orator Sydney Silverman. Secondly, he won the by-election in Clitheroe after the death of David Walder.

Described in "Roth's Parliamentary Profiles" as

"a no-nonsense Lancastrian barrister and a Euro-sceptic",

David went on to hold various offices such as Home Secretary and Chief Whip before his elevation to the other place. Colin Hughes of *The Independent* described him as

"a realistic, right-wing cynic about his opponents",

while Ian Aitken of *The Guardian* wrote:

"As Chief Whip, he presided over what is widely acknowledged to have been the most aggressive whipping operation in years."

I have a tough act to follow, but I shall try. I am sure that the House will wish David Waddington well in his appointment as governor of Bermuda and I am sure that many old friends are renewing their acquaintance with David and Jilly even as I speak.

Those right hon. and hon. Members who visited Ribble Valley during the by-election will know what a beautiful constituency it is. Three quarters of my constituency is designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty and there are many stunningly beautiful villages. It incorporates the forest of Bowland, with marvellous views from all quarters. My constituency also includes the leafy suburban district of Fulwood.

Furthermore, it has one of the lowest levels of unemployment in the United Kingdom. Indeed, it has the lowest level of unemployment in England. However, I am not complacent. I am deeply concerned about any of my constituents who do not have jobs. Therefore, I am anxious that the European fighter aircraft project should go ahead. It is a joint project between this country, Germany, Italy and Spain. A lot of jobs in the north-west rely upon the EFA project going into full production.

To turn from one sort of European union to another, there have been speeches from those with strong views on Europe—from Euro-sceptics, Europhiles, Europhobes and Euro-pragmatists. I have been all of those at different times. I am sure that each and every one of us gets upset when Europe seems to meddle with trivial things, and at times it disappoints us.

The European Community has a population of 344 million. With the enlargement of the Community to take in some of the EFTA countries, it could rise to about 370 million. That demonstrates how important a trading bloc it is. The Maastricht treaty will help towards its enlargement, through its structure and development. That will benefit those countries of eastern Europe that are also looking towards joining the European Community.

There is, however, no monopoly of vision among those who seek a united states of Europe. Those of us who back Britain being at the centre of Europe but not being consumed by Brussels have a vision, too. We want Europe to act together on those issues where it can be most effective, such as the environment. Global problems need global solutions. As for third-world aid, the European Community provides 42 per cent. of all third world aid. Forty per cent. of the third world aid that we contribute is now channelled through organisations such as the European Community. Last year, the United Kingdom gave £330 million to the European Community's aid budget.

We must work more closely together if we are to achieve stability and peace throughout the world. That is being achieved through the intergovernmental conferences. They provide a valid route that lies outside the Commission's competence. I welcome also the clear statements that have been made: on federalism—"No"; and on subsidiarity—"Yes." The à la carte provision of the pillared structure of the treaty, and the protocols over European monetary union and the social chapter strengthen our position without weakening our sovereignty.

Yes, we have to watch for encroachment. The working time directive has already been mentioned. We must fight strongly against its introduction by means of the health and safety directive. If it had been included in the social chapter, we could have decided not to opt into that directive. If we go ahead with it, it will cost the United Kingdom £3 billion.

The directive should not be introduced by means of qualified majority voting. If ever there were a case, this is a case for subsidiarity. We have been working steadfastly over the past 14 years to roll back the frontiers of socialism and we do not want to see it reintroduced through the back door, or through any open window that it can possibly find.

We have an excellent record when it comes to implementing Community law. I welcome the fact that the European Court of Justice will be able to fine members of the European Community which, on the face of it, seem to be communautaire but in reality are rather less when implementing Community law.

The future for all of us is exciting—working in unison, but making sure that this country stands up for areas where we can best implement domestic policies. I refer to matters such as zero-rated VAT; the right for us to determine our taxation policy; border controls to stamp out illegal immigrants, drug smuggling and fraud; and the preservation of unanimous voting in matters that most concern us.

The Maastricht treaty is imaginative in style and structure and it will take us to the next review stage in 1996, when, yet again, we shall look at further enlarging the Community, but not with greater Community encroachment.

1.15 am

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): First, I offer my compliments to the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) on his maiden speech. I have

taken part in numerous European Community debates in the House, but this debate is an exceedingly civilised affair. In part, that might be because of the numerous maiden speeches to which we have willingly listened. I must inform the hon. Gentleman and my new hon. Friends that such debates are not always so civilised and even-tempered as this. I hope to maintain that decorum during my intervention.

I begin by asking the Minister a question on article 198a, which concerns the Committee of the Regions. As a Scotsman, I appeal to him seriously to consider ensuring that the United Kingdom contingent on the Committee of the Regions is made up of local and regional Scottish representatives. Regional and local authority representatives could play an important part on that advisory committee. That is an eminently reasonable request which the Government could accept with something approaching equanimity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said—I agree with him—that Scots hold the Community in high regard. One or two unkind colleagues suggested that that is because of the money that has come to Scotland by way of the regional and social funds, but that is not wholly the case. In many respects we have a high regard for the Community, but there is a certain ambivalence of view. Many of us in Scotland hold to the view that we live in a highly centralised, multinational state which appears to be having imposed upon it with the implementation of the treaty a deeply centralised, multinational European state. There is a fear among Scots that political decision making has slipped from Scotland and, to a large extent, is slipping from the House of Commons.

We have already experienced the power of the European Court of Justice—for example, with regard to the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 which, within 12 months of its implementation, was changed; or rather, a section of it was suspended by an interim decision taken by the president of that court, sitting one afternoon in late 1989. We were deeply disappointed by that decision because we had agreed with the Government that that measure was particularly important for the interests of our fishermen and fishing communities. However, the President of the European Court of Justice knocked out a recently enacted Act of Parliament because he decided that it was incompatible with the treaty of Rome. That was an example of a European Community institution exercising its power.

The centralising process that now has a momentum of its own could be halted or slowed down through the rigorous and vigorous application of article 3b of the treaty, which refers to subsidiarity. Earlier today, I challenged the Prime Minister on his interpretation of subsidiarity. I said that it seems that where he and the Government are concerned, subsidiarity as defined in article 3b involves the allocation of competencies between central institutions of the European Community and the Westminster Government.

With the growing centralisation of strategic decision making, we should be devolving decision making to Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and, if the demand exists, to the regions of England. I remind right hon. and hon. Members that the Roman Catholic Church first gave the classical formulation of subsidiarity. In 1931, Pope Pius XI said:

"It is an injustice, a grave evil and a disturbance of right order for a larger and higher association to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower societies."

I am a Presbyterian, not a Roman Catholic, but I believe that that part of the encyclical could be quoted against certain elements of the treaty if we do not have rigorous implementation of article 3b.

Subsidiarity should be concerned with the allocation of competencies among the central institutions of the European Community, national Parliaments and legislatures, and regional governments—as will be the case with the länder in Germany and regional government in Spain. That continental definition of subsidiarity should be brought into the English language and applied to our domestic political affairs. I see nothing wrong with that interpretation of subsidiarity, but I see dangers with what appears to be the Prime Minister's position, which is too narrow and rigid.

I asked the Prime Minister earlier how his stocktaking of the governance of Scotland could be encompassed by his narrow interpretation of subsidiarity. There is sharp incompatibility—unless he is offering Scotland a cosmetic exercise or a placebo designed to ensure that the Scots continue their remarkable adherence to civil obedience in relation to the governance of our country.

I hope that the Prime Minister and his Ministers will rethink their interpretation of article 3b and let us have a continental European interpretation of it. If we do not, I do not see how we can hope to apply any braking action on the growing centralisation of decision making here in London, in Brussels, and in Luxembourg at the European Court of Justice.

We do not control the decision making of Ministers and we cannot much influence the decisions taken by the Council of Ministers. In the last Parliament, I was a member of the Select Committee on European Community legislation and, indeed, of European Community Standing Committee B. Despite what the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said, I do not believe that the House effects much restraint over the central institutions of the European Community. I know that the Government have been defeated a couple of times in Standing Committees A and B, but that does not add up to much. With the change in the Standing Order governing the modus operandi of the Committees which was introduced by the then Leader of the House, the Government can comfortably ignore those defeats when a report is made to the House following the deliberations of those Committees.

We have to aim for a partnership on the implementation of subsidiarity so that the House retains some effective restraint on the decision making of the central institutions to which I refer. Decision making at local level should be developed. For Scotland, it should be in a Scottish Parliament or Scottish assembly.

I have a couple of other points to make. I promise to be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Economic and monetary convergence, a single currency and a central bank are also important elements of the centralising process. If the European central bank is to be located in the United Kingdom, it ought to be sited in Edinburgh and not London. It would go down well with the Scots if it were sited, say, in George street in Edinburgh rather than in the City of London.

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

Another important dimension of the treaty is the development of a social Europe—the harmonisation of welfare and health provisions. Linked to that is the important concept of economic and social cohesion. It is right and proper that the rich nations should give financial support to the more impoverished nations of the Community. We shall certainly have to do something along those lines when certain eastern and central European nations join the Community—if they are allowed to do so by certain neighbours of ours in the Community.

The provisions for a common foreign and security policy have profound implications for NATO. The preamble to the treaty says that anything said in it

"shall not be prejudicial to the obligations that member states have towards the North Atlantic Treaty."

I cannot see how the development of a foreign and security policy can allow for the continuation of NATO as we know it. The one must supersede the other.

There is a growing body of opinion in America that the defence of Europe should be left to the nations of Europe. Gore Vidal recently made that point in a typically brilliant essay, and the view is certainly gaining ground in America. Canada is pulling out of NATO. I believe that in the near future America will reduce its forces in continental Europe to an absolute minimum. That is one of the implications of the common foreign and security policy. One day, the European Community will have to deal with the implications of a foreign and security policy based on the premise that Europe will have to be defended by the forces of European countries.

1.30 am

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this important debate.

I believe in a group of sovereign and nation states co-operating for their mutual advantage, principally through the means of a single market, regulated as little as possible. That is very different from integration, federalism or union. Silly me—I had thought that that was party policy, but unfortunately there has been some turning of the tide. However, having listened to some of the speeches, I wonder how much the tide has turned.

The most important aspect is subsidiarity—we are all agreed that that is vital. So, let us read the treaty. On page 5 it states that their various Majesties

"Resolved to mark a new stage in the process of European integration".

Over the page, it states:

"This treaty marks a new stage in the process of creating an ever closer union . . . The union shall be served by a single institutional framework".

Judging by those quotes—and there are plenty of others—the prospect of subsidiarity is looking a bit sick, long before we get to article 3b. With thoughts like that, after two happy years in the Ministry of Defence, I succumbed to friendly fire. I suppose that I should be grateful to the press. Half an hour after my resignation, they promoted me from Parliamentary Private Secretary to Parliamentary Secretary, doubtless on the theory that the higher the post that one holds, the further and faster one can fall.

The Maastricht treaty is a great success. I know it, because everybody says it. Sometimes I wonder if that is because the words mean whatever one wishes them to mean. To the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown)—the Liberal Benches are not packed—the treaty is a decisive, irrevocable step towards integration and unity. That is what he would say, whatever the agreement.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, far more perceptively, that it was game, set and match and that he recommends the treaty for ever closer union, and he is a very skilled negotiator. I was also pleased that, in the debates on 18 and 19 December 1990, following an intervention from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), he could say that he would have sympathy for a "looser association" or "a commonwealth". That is in the record.

The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) also made a speech on 18 December. He stumbled on the truth. Initially he described the treaty as "historic". Then he complained about the opt-outs that have been negotiated because we were standing still. Having changed his mind six or seven times on the business, standing still is not a bad idea or one could feel fairly giddy.

So nearly everybody is apparently pleased with the Maastricht agreement. It is a great victory—the press tell us so. Everybody tells me that it is a great victory. The question is, is it a great victory like Dunkirk, or is it a damage limitation exercise? So many in the party have said to me, "Don't worry about this, the EC will disintegrate, it will collapse. It is like those plants that grow up so tall, but, in the autumn, collapse under their own weight." I do not believe that that is the official policy, but, with the new open government, we shall soon see.

The Bill guarantees ever closer union. What it does not guarantee is our ability to enlarge the Community, which is what we need most. I well remember the referendum on staying in the EC. Apparently a referendum on going into the EC would not have been acceptable, but one on staying in the EC was. I remember the then chairman of the British Leyland motor corporation, Lord Stokes, saying that a much larger market would be extremely useful. He said that he would be able to sell his cars to the 300 million people of Europe. My word, he was going to sell some cars—the Austin, the Morris, the Riley, the MG and the Wolseley. We all remember the spirited campaign of the Beaverbrook newspapers.

The whole thing grew until it came to the Single European Act 1986. I have been here for five years, and colleague after colleague has said to me, "If ever I had to use my own judgment, that is the Act against which I should have voted." The only time I saw Mrs. Thatcher discomfited by questioning was when the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) asked at one Prime Minister's Question Time whether she was proud that she had forced through the Single European Act. It would have been so easy for her to say yes, but she did not.

On Friday, Mrs. Thatcher made a marvellous speech in the Hague. I would advise anyone to take careful note of her comparison between current developments in Europe and the Habsburg empire. It was so bureaucratic that, by the end of its life, one person in four worked for the Government. No doubt similar rules applied in the federal system of the USSR.

What is the cost effect of the increasing bureaucracy of the EC? How is that effecting our ability to increase our share of world trade? What effect is it having on the EC share of world trade? I hope that we will get the answers by tomorrow night.

The 1986 Act was sold as an expediting one. It would ensure that the single market could be completed by the end of this year, which was a laudable aim. The reality is that the Act has given excessive power to bureaucrats.

During the election campaign, I spoke to many shopkeepers and the owners of large and small businesses in the constituency. They all complained about having to comply with directions and regulations, and yet more directions and regulations. They found it difficult to comply on grounds of practicality and cost.

Every farmer in my constituency complained that the local abattoirs had to close because they could not comply with the latest EC directives. One abattoir received a directive about the need for a new washroom for the men. That all-tiled washroom, which cost a fortune, was installed. In the next post, it received another directive about foot-pumps for the taps. That instruction did not matter, because the firm went bust, but I do not know whether that directive was the cause.

Every baker and confectioner has had to get new chilled cabinets for his custard pies and pastries. The same directive applies, whether one is in Stroud or Sicily, in favour of the great god harmonisation. The list is endless.

Perhaps I was the only constituency Member to have such conversations during the election campaign. The bandwagon is to harmonise, standardise and regulate. The one constant is that it always favours big firms at the expense of small ones. What is the effect of a 48-hour working week on a small industrial firm that suddenly gets a £50,000 export order that must be delivered by Friday week? Are staff told to roll up their sleeves—all hands on deck? Oh no, not if a 48-hour week is introduced. In this country, people obey the law, whereas in many other countries they do not. Laws that are ignored are bad laws.

I hope that no one will vote, after this debate, without at least having studied Mr. Norman Tebbit's speech on 18 December. He referred to the treaty creating the European union, covering the Community's existing and increased responsibilities. In a nutshell, that is what we are asked to vote for tomorrow night. If hon. Members think that it is just another step down the road, they should listen to this: the aims are

"the creation of the common foreign and security policy covering the formulation in the longer term of a common defence policy, which may in time lead to a common defence; an increase in the role of the European Parliament . . . the appointment of an ombudsman plus an improvement in the Parliament's legislative powers by the introduction of the co-decision procedure; redefinition or extension of Community competence in education, training, cohesion, research and development, environment, trans-european networks, industry, health, culture, consumer protection and development cooperation".—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1991; Vol. 201, c. 323.]

That is an extensive list, and little is left for national Parliaments if it comes about. It does not include all the regulations and directives still to come under the 1986 Act, or anything about the citizenship of the union.

I fear that we are probably progressing towards a single currency. "Whether" and "when" will, I suppose, satisfy for the moment, but one dog is not barking in the dark. I wonder whether it is proposed that we should lose the power to decide the size of the EC budget. Can it be guaranteed that that will not happen? I should be grateful for a reply on that point.

The combination of directives and the list that I read out will damage national Parliaments, particularly this place. I hope that we shall use our time as President of the EC to widen, not deepen. A distinguished parliamentary draftsman who lives in my constituency tells me that, in his opinion, the Bill is so badly defective that disputes with the Commission and the European Court of Justice are certain. I suppose it would be extremely cynical to say that that would be in some people's interests.

It is no wonder that the EC is now prepared to define subsidiarity. I believe that we are simply being asked to define it, as I see little about putting it into practice. But no subject of any consequence remains in which the centralists would not claim to have control.

What is it to be: democracy or bureaucracy? I shall vote against the Bill for several reasons. Only by doing so will we be more likely to retain our national frontiers. Are we not aware of the dangers of deepening before widening, creating a rich men's club of 12 nations, with millions of have-nots on its eastern borders? Hundreds of thousands of people will certainly seek to enter the land of plenty —the EC countries—and they will enter, legally or illegally. What effect will that have on public opinion in Germany, France or Italy? What effect is it already having there on public opinion? The right-wing fascist groups are already in the ascendant.

As has already been said, whether we like it or not, the issue of national boundaries will almost certainly be decided by the European Court of Justice. There is little doubt what it will do in the name of ever closer union.

My second big doubt relates to cohesion or regional development grant—the old idea of Governments picking winners. I thought that the Conservative party was the party of low taxes and market forces—policies that served us so well in the 1980s. Rebates have been negotiated and that system can be changed only by a unanimous decision of the member Governments, ratified by their Parliaments. Therefore, there is no great battle to fight or quids pro quo to be exchanged on that issue. We retain our right to those rebates for ever.

If we are to have cohesion or regional development grants worth billions of pounds, how are they to be paid for? If value added tax is to be harmonised, how is it to be paid for? It can be paid for only by direct taxes, and I cannot remember preaching the gospel of increased direct taxation in my constituency during the last election campaign.

There is a convenient notion that Germany will be everybody's favourite aunt, somehow wishing and willing to fund reunification—the cost of which has already been mentioned tonight—and perhaps to take in hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the east and the USSR, while at the same time being able to fund cohesion, principally in southern Europe. To think that Germany can achieve all that is a fallacy. If it is to be the paymaster —even assuming that the deutschmark is still a safe anchor —it will demand increased powers, and who could blame it for wanting them?

Do we believe—as apparently the French do—that it is realistic to try to tie down the Gulliver that is Germany? No doubt, when he is tied down, his cheque-writing arm will be left free. If hon. Members do believe that, they should vote for the Bill. The Commission's powers have increased, and are still doing so. If hon. Gentlemen believe that they should be further increased, they should vote for the Bill. If they believe that ever closer union is substantially different from federalism, they should vote for the Bill.

[Mr. Roger Knapman]

I thought that we opted out of the social charter in December. Therefore, I hope that we shall be given a full explanation why negotiations are still being conducted on the 48-hour working week. I would have preferred to see that matter settled before we were asked to vote for the Bill.

If hon. Members are trying to delude themselves into thinking that the so-called pillars in the Bill are built of stone, and inter-Government activity is to be unchallenged and able to withstand the ravages of both time and bureaucracy, I ask them to look at volume I of the second report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. It states:

"It cannot be taken for granted that the common foreign and security policy and co-operation on interior and justice matters will continue to be handled intergovernmentally".

The pillars are already looking a bit shaky.

If, despite the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 and the Factortame case, we believe that we are still a sovereign Parliament and that the European Court of Justice will not overturn further Acts passed here and usurp the powers of the House, we should vote for the Bill. Are we to believe that we can have ever closer union and still retain the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland? If we do believe that, we should vote for the Bill.

It may be a minority view, but if Sir John Stokes were here, he would be saying, "People are beginning to talk about this in pubs." That is a serious matter. I think that they will be rather angry when they see what we are doing in their name.

Since December, public opinion has moved fast against federalism—in Germany, in France and in the United Kingdom. Recent polls—I know that polls are not the flavour of the month—suggest that a large majority are against many of the provisions of the treaty. That is why we must delay the deepening before the widening. The institutions appropriate to a Community of 30 nations are not the same as those suitable for a rich men's club of 12. Above all, we held a referendum on whether to stay in the EC; we are the custodians, not the owners, of the people's sovereignty. The moral and constitutional case for a referendum is overwhelming.

1.50 am

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): While offering you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my congratulations on your new post, may I also thank you for the opportunity to make my maiden speech in this historic debate? Looking around the Chamber, I suspect that I will set a record as the new Labour Member to have sat the longest time in one sitting before making a maiden speech. I only hope that, by the end of it, no one will feel that few have sat for so long to say so little.

We have heard some good maiden speeches tonight. I was especially interested in the speech of the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan), who represents the constituency next door to mine. Last week, he wrote to the Boundary Commission suggesting that the ward of Woolston in Southampton be transferred from the Eastleigh constituency to my constituency. It is an extremely strongly Labour-voting ward. Whilst the transfer would therefore have the deplorable effect of ensuring that the hon. Member for Eastleigh remains the Member for that constituency for as long as his party selects him to do so, it would also have the admirable effect of achieving the same result for me in my constitueucy. That seems to provide a basis for a long-lasting partnership between the two of us.

I am interested in election results. My majority might be described as wafer-thin. I replace the only person to break Labour's line of electoral successes in the constituency since the second world war. Chris Chope was above all a conviction Thatcherite politician. When he told the press that he cried when Margaret Thatcher lost the leadership of the Conservative party, he restated his political position in a memorable way. He also confounded some of us by finally revealing the issue on which he could show such deep human emotion.

It is debatable whether Chris Chope's resolve to drive a six-lane motorway deep through a beautiful Hampshire down finally cost him his seat, but the determination with which he set about the task was certainly typical of him. I do not want to seem ungenerous. In the constituency, Chris Chope will be thanked by many hundreds of families for his work on the Housing Defects Act 1984. There are many pre-cast reinforced concrete homes in the constituency. Secondly, although a member of the Tory Right, he never attempted to play what is euphemistically known as the race card in my constituency. By refusing to use poison for political advantage he contributed to the fact that, although racism is definitely serious and present in the constituency, it is by no means as bad as it is in many other multiracial parts of the country.

Thirdly, from the moment that Chris Chope entered the House to the moment he left it he was a politician who stood up consistently and forthrightly for the values in which he believed. As far as I know, he never tried to shift with the tides of changing public opinion. That is probably what he would most like me to say about his time in the House.

While waiting to make my maiden speech, I could hardly say that I felt at home, but at times I felt a sense of deja vu. As far as I can remember, my first involvement in a national political campaign was during the referendum on Europe. I voted no, but as time went by, as transnational companies came to dominate our economy more than ever before, as the financial system was deregulated more than we had ever thought possible in the 1970s, and as our economy became more integrated with that of Europe, as Europe became real and inevitable, there were times when I wondered what had happened to the ghost of the "no" campaign of the 1970s. Had it, like a traditional ghost, been doomed to wander the corridors and rooms of a venerable palace? Sitting here tonight, while my eyes closed occasionally and while I listened to the voices around me, I could hear the ghosts of that campaign. I believe that such ghosts are better exorcised than reincarnated.

I represent a large part of the great city of Southampton. There are few cities in this country which have been so shaped by the world at large and which have done so much to shape the world at large. My city's history is international, cosmopolitan, ambitious and courageous. The banks of the Rivers Itchen and Test, which flow through and past my constituency, have over the centuries been invaded, raided and bombed. Troops have left the port of Southampton to go to many conflicts—English archers to Agincourt and allied troops to the Normandy beaches among them.

In its time, the Saxon port of Hamwic was a rival to Viking York in the wealth and extent of its trade links, even then reaching deep into the heart of modern Russia. The Pilgrim Fathers left from Southampton—not Plymouth, as Plymouth's tourist board sometimes claims—on their historic voyage to America.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the development of the modern port once again put Southampton at the heart of an international network of trade and of people. From the Huguenot weavers onwards, people have come to my city from all parts of the world and all parts of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland to make Southampton the place that it is today. Because of that history, the international world and the European world hold few fears for Southampton today. It is a great European city and will grow as a great European city. A city council report, which was debated today while I was here, stated:

"Southampton must stand for quality, equality and opportunity as a leading cosmopolitan city in Europe."

If any right hon. or hon. Members are at a loose end in the recess next week, I invite them to Southampton and to the international trade fair which opens next week. Visitors will be struck by the commitment, vision, participation and strong partnerships for success in Europe which exist in the city.

After all, what is the significance of hundreds of schoolchildren and older students participating in educational exchanges, or of pensioners attending the recent European pensioners' parliament in Strasbourg? What is the significance of a chamber of commerce forging strong links with other chambers of commerce in Rouen, Le Havre, Barcelona and elsewhere, or of trade unions regularly meeting their colleagues in Germany, France and Spain?

What is the significance of traffic engineers collaborating with colleagues in Greece and Germany on the problems of urban congestion, or of the university, the institute of higher education and the technical college with literally hundreds of academic and training links? What is the significance of a city council whose ties with Le Havre and Rems-Muir-Kreiss are not tea parties but the real basis of economic collaboration and of co-operation in training, research and culture?

I suggest that the significance is that Europe, in a city such as Southampton, is not an abstract entity to be dissected in an academic way as some hon. Members have done today. Instead, it is a living reality. All the links that I have mentioned, and many others, are part of a real commitment on the part of the city to make Europe work.

My city has a breadth of vision of Europe. It is a vision that includes the understanding that Europe, above all, must be for people. Those of us who live in a great European city, one that is already organically tied to Europe in every part of its daily economic life, know that economic success is only half the challenge.

I have constituents who ask questions about Europe. Pensioners ask whether there will be a European future for them or whether they will always be the most shabbily treated pensioners in Europe. Parents ask whether their children have a European children's future or whether they will always have less chance of child care and nursery education than children in most other European countries. Young people ask whether they will have a European future here or on the continent without the quality of education and training that other young Europeans enjoy.

Those who ask those questions do not do so because they do not want to be part of Europe. They want to be full partners in Europe in every way, in a Europe for people and not in a Europe with 11 players and the United Kingdom on the substitutes' bench. In Southampton there is participation, commitment, vision and partnership.

Yesterday, the director of the chamber of commerce wrote to me as follows:

"A significant ingredient in our future economic development is the close partnership existing between the Chamber and the City Council."

It is a Labour city council that is at the heart of Southampton's European drive. It is not doing everything and controlling everything, but it is shaping, guiding, focusing, supporting, providing an infrastructure, opening up the waterfront, investing in science parks and providing services which are at the core of a successful united effort in Europe. As I have said, it is a Labour city council.

I must contrast the mood and achievement in Southampton with much of what I have heard in the House and with the Government's record. The Government's commitment is shallow. The bottom line is that nothing shall be done to promote Britain's interests in Europe which can possibly conflict with the interests of the Conservative party in Britain.

There is narrow participation in a Europe for business perhaps, but not for a Europe for people. There is myopic vision in which the options seem to be, "Take it if you like it; leave it if you don't." There is no understanding of grasping Europe and using it as the opportunity that it really is. There has been a rejection of partnership. The Government have turned their back on the proper role of elected government at local, national, regional and European levels in shaping a Europe for all their people.

There is not time to dwell on the details of the many Divisions which lie ahead, tomorrow and in the coming weeks, and it might not be proper to do so in a maiden speech. I know, however, that the message which goes from the House must be that what Southampton is doing is right. Any message going from the House which questions what a city like Southampton is doing to be a great European city will be a great and bitter disappointment to the thousands of my constituents who are building a new Europe and a great European city.

2.5 am

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): It is good to have the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. I am glad to be called by you to speak in this interesting debate. I want to make a point to my Whip. Why do the best speeches always take place when there is a one-line Whip? Surely there must be a message there. We have heard wonderful speeches tonight, including many good maiden speeches and many powerful and potent ones from Members who have been here for some time. As we always have the best speeches when there is a one-line Whip, why do we not have more of them?

I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham). Like many of my hon. Friends, I both knew and valued the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, so it was good to hear how highly the hon. Gentleman himself valued Christopher Chope's service to his constituency. I think that he will be a worthy successor to Christopher Chope, as he has obvious commitment to and great knowledge of his constituency. It was especially

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

interesting to hear him speak of the ties that his many-faceted constituents have already forged with the European Community. I look forward to hearing many more speeches from him.

I was also glad to be in the Chamber to listen to my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), who originally came from my constituency. He made a very powerful speech. I do not want to make that sort of speech. There have been many grand speeches tonight, and many wonderful emotions and visions have been rolled out for the House to consider. I want to talk on a more practical level about the impact of the European Community, about where we are now and about how it has affected us already.

Because MacSharry is of such importance in my constituency, in the run-up to the general election we had a major conference on his proposals. Because the European debate about Maastricht is so crucial to our future, we had a large open meeting about that. As many hon. Members have said, during the election the question of our membership of the Community was on people's lips and minds because of the dominance of Maastricht last December.

My main concern is that I do not believe that many of our electorate realise the position that we already hold in Europe. Indeed, it is true to say that, since Madrid two years ago, there has been a large and determined shift from Britain towards the heart of Europe. That followed our signing of the Single European Act. Maastricht is a small issue compared with the largeness of that decision. My concern is that we have not properly briefed the public; perhaps we have not even properly briefed ourselves.

The Single European Act debate seems to have been so relatively slender compared with the largeness of the debate that we have already allowed ourselves on Maastricht, yet it appears to me, as a Member of only five years standing, that at least half the political decisions that affect this country are taken by the European Community, in Brussels or in Strasbourg. Perhaps we fool ourselves if we see any reason for that other than our own votes here in Parliament.

The primary engine of prosperity in my constituency is agriculture. Can we honestly say when we last took a major agricultural decision in the British Parliament? We cannot, because the decisions are made elsewhere. That is true for other enormous industries where the political decisions, such as they are, are taken in Brussels or Strasbourg. I want us to work from where we are and not from where we might have been or were.

We have talked a lot tonight about the European Court of Justice, but the fundamental work of any Parliament, be it Strasbourg, Westminster or elsewhere, in an economy such as our own is the legislation and its amendments, the Green and White Papers, Bills and Acts. That is where we can best see where we fit into Europe's legislative programme.

Harmonisation is meant to be the key focus of the Brussels legislative activity, but Brussels is now creating new legislation which overrules our own. It has taken us time to recognise that draft directives from Brussels have that capacity.

My previous industry was computer software. I therefore worked hard on the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988, at least half of which was dedicated to computer software. The importance of that industry cannot be overstated. It is the largest industry in the EC. It is perhaps the central issue on which the resolution of the GATT Uruguay round rests because of copyright's economic impact. For computer software and pharmaceuticals, copyright is the critical factor. The size of the computer software industry in Europe may be a quarter of the total national budget of the United Kingdom. That is why I say this is an important matter.

We spent 12 years creating our new Copyright Act. We started with a Green Paper and went on to a White Paper, we had a Bill in the other place and we spent two years arguing about it in the other place and the House of Commons, and then it went back again to the other place. In 1988 it received the rubber stamp of Royal Assent. I remember people saying that that was it for the next 30 years. The new Act had taken 30 years to create, and we were not expected to need another for a further 30 years.

Less than a year later, an interesting animal hove over the horizon. I smelt it coming, because it was within my area of work—a draft directive on computer software. I went to see Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry, but they said that our own new legislation was wonderful, that it stood supreme, that it was as good as any in the world, as good as that in the United States and it could not be bettered; it was an example. I said that it might be an example, but that something was coming which could alter it. But I was told that the Act would not be altered and that anything that came from Europe would come underneath it and fit in neatly. I said, "How very interesting."

Then a number of large multinational companies came to see me, such as Shell, BP, IBM, ICL. People representing some very large companies indeed appeared on my doorstep here. We settled down and discussed some extraordinarily difficult concepts coming in that draft directive. If I go into detail, it is to give just one example, but it is a particularly interesting one.

When we sell goods in Britain, the purchaser buys the product as fit for use. I am sure that there must be some wonderful legal phrase for that, but it means that, if I go and buy something over the counter, it is supposed to be fit for the purpose for which I have purchased it.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Section 14 of the Sale of Goods Act 1892 will give my hon. Friend that definition.

Miss Nicholson: I thank my hon. and learned Friend. He still has not given me the definition, but as a Scot I shall forgive him.

That concept is not so in other member states. When one buys something there, it does not come under that framework. When one buys a piece of shrink-wrapped software in the United Kingdom, it will inevitably have faults. I am afraid that it always does. One is allowed to take it home, open it and try to make it work. If it does not, the software can be rectified on the spot by the purchaser because it is not fit for use. In other EC member states, that cannot be done and the draft directive specifically lays down that that cannot be done. Instead, one has to go back to the supplier and pay him to come and put the software right.

That does not matter a scrap if the software is a trivial game for one's laptop computer—but if the buyer is Shell

International, they cannot stop a continuous manufacturing process every time a new piece of software develops a fault, and get an IBM engineer to put it right. We had a wonderful argument over that.

The draft directive created about seven other extremely abstruse problems. The DTI said, "Don't worry. They will not affect us. The directive will fit into our legislation." Sixty-seven parliamentary questions and many months later, the reverse applied.

We have no ability to amend draft directives, which come at us rather like cannon balls. They are not really drafts at all, but large, concrete objects that hurtle past our parliamentary ears. They may glance harmlessly off European Standing Committee A or European Standing Committee B, but they cannot be amended there either —although civil servants can make proposals back to Brussels away from Parliament. Ninety-nine times out of 100, there is not even a vote in our European Committees.

I tried all sorts of tricks to secure a debate on the Floor of the House on the computer software directive, but none of them worked. The subject did not fit an Adjournment debate or Government business, and one would be lucky to secure a private Member's Bill. In any case, as it was money-related, it could not be debated. We have allowed ourselves to be plugged into an enormous and powerful engine, but we have failed to buy the toolkit. We have not given ourselves the ability to make any changes.

Harmonisation may mean new legislation for some countries—such as Portugal, which did not have any software copyright legislation—but for the majority it has been a melding of best practice. That is what it is meant to be. The information market, however, is probably the key player in the effectiveness of the Single European Act. The physical movement of goods can only happen through the transmission of knowledge—and that is achieved through the newly identified information market.

It is a true market, in which the stalls offer the sale of information and the means of altering and moving it. Many Community members have only a fragmented information market, and others have virtually none of their own but an ability to link with parts of the information market on offer from other nations.

The SWIFT banking system for transmitting funds in a wholly secure computer environment is a key early example of the international information market. However, because the information market in almost every European country is either non-existent or very fragmented, Brussels has started to create new legislation in areas of intellectual endeavour that have not yet been constrained or buttressed by the law.

All sorts of exciting things are emerging. Data protection is an obvious one. Our legislation was founded on the Council of Europe's 1981 draft directive, and there is this common thread throughout all 12 member nations. However, the Community in its wisdom has discarded that directive in favour of new thinking, and has introduced a wholly fresh data protection draft directive.

Data protection is really a misleading description of the holding of information about us all—knowledge storage about every citizen in the United Kingdom. The originator of the draft directive on data protection does not like direct mail, so the directive is going to outlaw direct mail. That may be fine for you and me, but many people like stuff to plop through their letter boxes: it is how charities raise the bulk of their funds. That is a small point; the draft directive contains a good deal more for hon. Members to look up and think about.

As yet, there is no United Kingdom provision on privacy. I believe that we are almost unique in Europe in having no law on personal privacy, and we shall not be able to last long without some such provision if new information market legislation is to come out of Brussels. Ownership of data is also critical. There have been comments in the newspapers this week about identity cards, but data ownership is already a subject of great concern in the United Kingdom.

There has been a small move in that regard, however —in the south-west, actually—in the form of the smart card, which contains the individual's health data. That enabled people to plug into hospital computers, dentists' computers and ambulance computers, and the authorities concerned would know at once what the patient's health needs were and what to do. But there have been problems with data ownership, because the individual was not allowed to own it. In the end, Treasury counsel deemed that, for the moment—until a better concept could be found—it belonged to the Secretary of State for Health. Ownership of data will certainly be a very large problem in the near future.

I make these points only to show the House that, under the current EC system, there is little or no effective member-state parliamentary input into matters of huge importance. My own solution would be to offer a systems exchange—a link between Strasbourg and member Parliaments at a very early stage. The House has set up an all-party parliamentary group to examine the difficulties that we have identified in the current system. I have the honour to be the chairman. We have called it the European information market all-party group. I do not think that we are going to offer a democratic-deficiency sticking plaster but we may offer a practical way of bringing relevant experience of member Parliaments into the creation of important new legislation at an early stage.

Much has been said tonight about sovereign states. I do not believe that the sovereign state exists in the modern world; it has not existed for years. It certainly does not exist with the sort of ownership and transmission of knowledge that I have touched on so briefly tonight. Indeed, I believe that most large decisions are made outside modern Governments, owing to the success of our democracy and the genuine subsidiarity of the industrial and business marketplaces—not the political marketplaces. I think that decision making has long since stopped being the vertical action described tonight by hon. Members who have spoken in support of sovereign state, and became a lateral, indeed a multilateral effort.

I hope that we shall move, with due dignity and not too much speed, towards a single European currency. I believe and hope that we shall move into less politically constricted central banks—although I know the difficulties that that will bring in regard to democratic accountability, which is an important issue.

I believe that the fundamental shift that has taken place in Britain since the Madrid summit has been the move towards the heart of Europe. I wish that we had triggered that move earlier; we could have, if we had engaged in a debate on the Single European Act with all the vigour and breadth of involvement that we have brought to today's debate on Maastricht.

[Miss Nicholson]

The Single European Act—pace my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman)—brings benefits, but also constraints. It offers four great freedoms: the movement of goods, capital, skills and qualifications. To be effective, those freedoms must be protected, and to be beneficial they must be harnessed rather than roaming freely. A wider and deeper Europe lies ahead, and that is why I support the Government.

2.24 am

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Although the treaty signed at Maastricht and before us in the Bill represented a step towards greater European unity—a reason why many people would welcome it—I believe that the Bill should be opposed on Second Reading, for a number of important reasons. First, it exhibits and reflects a monetarist vision of Europe, where low inflation, currency stability and low borrowing are all given pre-eminence over other vital issues of economic policy such as full employment, growth, regional equality and redistribution of wealth. Those issues, which have been ignored in the treaty and in the stance taken by the Government at Maastricht and represented in the Bill, were put forward by the Labour party in the debate leading up to the Maastricht summit, but were ignored by the Government's negotiators. That, coupled with the economic framework that we see being put in place as a result of the treaty and the Government's policies, will produce a Europe with an economic programme that is profoundly deflationary, particularly in its impact on Britain. It will block a policy for full employment, which must be central to the British Government's economic programme.

Furthermore, it will create, as we are already seeing, not just in Britain but throughout Europe—in some places to a far more worrying extent—a rise in racial inequality and tension, feeding off the massive unemployment and deflation which result from this monetarist vision of Europe.

Secondly, I urge rejection of the Bill because it excludes the social chapter. We are alone in doing that, and the reasons why it should have been included have been well made by my right hon. and hon. Friends already. Thirdly, the Bill is profoundly wrong because it thwarts the project for democratising the European Community that the Germans and others put forward but that the British Government, pre-eminently, succeeded in blocking.

The Bill is essentially a Conservative Bill, following a Conservative-negotiated Maastricht treaty. If a Labour Government had negotiated that treaty, or if, after 9 April, we had been in a position to re-negotiate, the outcome would have been very different. I hope that, even if we are unable to oppose the Bill on Second Reading, we shall oppose Third Reading if our amendments are rejected in Committee.

Mr. George Robertson: My hon. Friend makes some valid objections to the treaty, but will he bear in mind that every socialist and social democratic party in the European Community is in favour of ratifying the treaty? *[Interruption.]* And so are all the conservative parties. Only Mr. Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front in France, the Republican party in Germany and the Lombard Neo-Fascist League in Italy are opposed to ratification. All the other parties believe that this treaty—warts and all—represents a step forward. My hon. Friend and I, and our party, will campaign for improvements to the treaty, in the hope that the aims of the intergovernmental conference of 1996 might be achieved. When we come to the vote tomorrow night, I ask my hon. Friend to bear that point in mind.

Mr. Hain: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's instructive comments, which I shall certainly bear in mind. However, I remind him that what we face as socialists in Britain, quite distinct from our counterparts in the rest of the Community, is a Bill from which many of the advantages for which they fought and have succeeded in maintaining are excluded. I refer in particular to the social chapter and to the opt-out clause on economic and monetary union. They have won those achievements. Ours have been thwarted and barred to us. That is the difference.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) was right to talk about exorcising the ghosts of 1972 and 1975. Socialists in particular have to see the debate in an entirely fresh context. We see now two broad agendas for the future of Europe: one from the right, which favours the free market, and the other from the left, which favours the social market. To put it another way, Conservative Members of Parliament favour capital and private profits, while Labour Members of Parliament wish to defend the interests of labour and community values. A massive gulf is opening up in Europe between those two agendas. There will continue to remain a conflict of interest over those issues in the debate on the European Community.

Mrs. Currie: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says about this distinct gap. Why did we not hear about it during the general election that we have just won? Why did we not hear anything from the Opposition about socialism until after they had lost the election?

Mr. Hain: The hon. Lady may well have been deaf during the election to the Labour party's arguments—not least, incidentally, on proper convergence conditions for economic and monetary union to be included in the Maastricht treaty. We put forward very clear socialist policies, but the hon. Lady was obviously not listening.

Many people regard the debate on Maastricht and its complexities as arcane and erudite, but it is crucial when set against the background that I have described. Until Maastricht, for example, majority voting in the Council of Ministers was restricted to economic issues. That favoured the right. It was impossible for any one country to exercise the veto against the interests of capital and the triumph of market forces. By contrast, the veto could be exercised and was exercised by the British Government on social and environmental issues. To some extent, the veto can, post-Maastricht, still be exercised.

This scenario is no accident. The absence of majority voting means that a country such as Britain could block measures to protect the interests of workers, consumers, or citizens, but that it could not block economic, competitive measures. The result is that economic harmonisation has been given much greater priority than social harmonisation. From my socialist point of view, that imbalance needs to be reversed. Economic convergence over monetary policy, inflation, interest rates, currencies and so on has been put before social convergence over welfare benefits, resource redistribution to deprived or outlying

regions and minimum wage levels. That imbalance is at the heart of the debate on the Maastricht treaty. For example, the Prime Minister was able to win acceptance for sidelining social policy from the Maastricht treaty, whereas a Labour Prime Minister would never have been able to sideline the central issue of competition policy.

If we look at this framework of a left versus right view of Europe, it is important to identify the differences not just over economic policy but in other respects. Take, for example, the future composition of the European Community. In the post-Gorbachev era it might appear that the enlargement of the European Community eastward is common ground. But it is hardly conceivable that the Prime Minister would have announced that he favoured a Europe stretching to the Urals if the former Soviet states had not lurched so enthusiastically toward free markets and privatisation—the Minister of State is nodding in agreement—and if many western capital sources did not see an advantage in the new eastern Europe and the cheap pool of labour which could be exploited. That is why there has been a return to a more favourable view of eastern Europe and, possibly, of embracing it within the European Community.

Socialists such as myself have always argued for a united Europe and for bringing eastern European countries into the European Community, primarily for political reasons, but we are now hearing that argument being advanced for quite different reasons. Against that background there is a choice to be made between the rapid economic and monetary integration of the European Community as it currently stands and as Maastricht points toward—the fast-lane that was decided at Maastricht—and the enlargement of the Community to include the EFTA states and eastern Europe.

The right in particular tends to favour the fast-lane option, but there is a case for saying that enlargement of the Community is the greater political priority and that the choice between horizontal integration across the whole of Europe, compared with vertical integration deepening economic and monetary integration of the existing 12 European Community states, is important. It amounts to a choice between the democratic and economic imperatives of European unity. The two may be in direct conflict. If, for example, the Twelve accelerate their economic integration with the speed now envisaged, they may effectively prevent enlargement because the entry conditions for the other countries are prohibitive. We should face up to that dilemma.

The democratic issues at stake have not really been addressed by the Maastricht treaty, except on the fringes. The Government have consistently turned their backs on them. It is interesting that they have done so, because they want a European Community that has no serious democratic mechanisms for holding capital and the free market accountable. They want an economic free-for-all. That is another key difference between us.

It has been alleged by both sides, in particular by the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), that greater power for the European Parliament would deny British sovereignty. That is false. To present the choice as being between Westminster and Brussels is to misrepresent or misunderstand the distribution of power in modern Europe. The issue is not surrendering more power from the British people to European institutions of one kind or another—that was surrendered long ago—but whether power should be discharged by freewheeling appointees and Ministers or directly elected representatives. That issue has been ducked by the Government and by the debate on the Maastricht treaty. We shall see that the Government have surrendered a major democratic principle which we now need to address.

Sovereignty was ceded to a Euro-level, not so much politically but, more important, economically, a long time ago. In a nutshell, capital has gone European but labour has not. Transnationals now dominate the European economy. Financial deregulation has made it very difficult, if not impossible, within nation states to exert any serious democratic accountability. Business and finance now operate at a European if not a global level. However, there are no effective democratic mechanisms to exert a countervailing influence on behalf of the ordinary citizen.

Many people in Europe look with absolute wonderment at the obtuse British debate which suggests that Bonn, Barcelona or Paris might, for some odd reason, be more enthusiastic than London about conceding power to Brussels. That is palpably not the case. The debate in the rest of Europe is quite different from the notably inward and backward looking argument in Britain.

Unlike many romanticists on both sides of the House who foresee a loss of sovereignty in increasing European political integration, I share the view of many continental socialists. They see the real issue as one of reclaiming some of the sovereignty that has been lost via the only feasible institution appropriate—the European Parliament. That is the base for the future that we should have entered into in the Bill and in the Maastricht treaty. At the moment, the European Parliament is little more than a talking shop. The Commission is not obliged to consult it properly and Members of the European Parliament cannot initiate legislation or control the Commission effectively. Although some people say that the Maastricht treaty makes some advances in that direction, they do not go far enough. The Labour party should continue to address that point.

Although the Commissioners and their officials wield considerable power, diatribes against Brussels bureaucrats miss the main point. They are not democratically accountable, but nor is the Council of Ministers—the all-powerful body in the European Community. Although it has greater claims to democratic legitimacy because it consists of representatives of member Governments, it effectively acts as a secret cabal. The basis for its decisions are not open to public scrutiny or democratic debate. It operates via a process of brokerage and wheeler-dealing. It is difficult to influence from the outside especially in concert with the Commission. The whole point of the European Parliament is to express the general interest of European citizens through their representatives, not through indirect representatives as on the Council of Ministers. To claim that the Council of Ministers is a democratic force is to claim, in effect, that Britain should be governed by representatives of the Association of County Councils. That is the real analogy, but it does not stand up in the British context and it should not stand up in the European context.

Our European colleagues also find it very difficult to comprehend the debate in Britain about federalism. Many people in Europe seem ignorant of the real meaning of federalism. It does not mean greater centralisation with fortress Europe stripping Westminster of its authority. On the contrary, a federalist structure is one in which powers reside at each level of government. Those powers are

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clearly defined and each level has sovereignty over its own decisions and the duties that are specified as its responsibility. Crucially at each level appropriate decisions are not delegated by some higher authority—they are taken as of right.

The socialist writer Harold Laski once said that all power is federal. He meant that, in a genuine democracy, power is dispersed on a pluralistic basis and federalism is a reflection of that. It is significant that, in the British context, the Labour party has been moving towards a federalist structure, notably through advocating devolution to a Scottish Parliament, a Welsh Assembly and to elected authorities in England. A European Parliament worthy of the name would be a logical next step above the intermediate national sphere at Westminster.

It is wrong to suggest that European federalism is about greater centralisation. It is about democratic control and ensuring that unaccountable Euro-elites are made accountable to the people and their elected representatives. It is also important in the context of the importance of the regions. There is a danger that European growth, particularly under the monetarist conditions set out at Maastricht and pursued with enthusiasm by the Government, will cause European growth and wealth to be concentrated at the hub—in the Benelux countries, western Germany and perhaps northern Italy and the south-east of England. The periphery of Europe will decline.

Unless there are stong European regional investment policies, vast areas of the European Community will become poorer. Capital will flood to the hub, where political power will also increasingly be centralised. That is the danger of political centralisation. It is not the mythical danger that federalism would create through a powerful European Parliament.

Areas such as Wales, for example, are in danger of becoming forgotten parts of Europe unless the imbalance is addressed and significant adjustments are made by means of democratic mechanisms. So we should insist on an active regional policy to complement an active democratic framework for Europe. In that context, the proposal for a central European bank is a vital issue which was not satisfactorily addressed by Maastricht. The only way in which it can be addressed is by making the bank democratically accountable to not merely the European Council of Finance Ministers but a rejuvenated European Parliament. Otherwise, we face the certainty of a bankers' Europe rather than a democratic Europe.

In short, the Bill is typical of a Government who are concerned only with monetarist economic policy. They do not care about creating social justice, about democracy or about economic equity. That is why I oppose the Bill. That is why I would like to see promoted with greater vigour in the coming years a socialist Europe in which people's power rather than bankers' power rules.

2.46 am

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): First, I join those who have congratulated you, Sir, on attaining the high office of Deputy Speaker of the House. It has given great pleasure to Members from all parties—not least, if you are still allowed to have them, to your many friends on the Conservative Benches.

It is a great privilege to take part in this great and important debate. Otherwise, why would we all still be here at a quarter to 3 in the morning listening to important and interesting speeches and waiting to play our part? I belong to that growing group of people who are keen that Britain should play an important part in Europe with commitment and enthusiasm, but we are deeply worried —I make no criticism of my right hon. Friend the Minister —lest we may be selling the past for the future. Certainly, the number of regulations and directives that have come from Brussels in recent years over which we were told that we had no control whatsoever is worrying.

We are told, "Ah well, you signed up for this when you signed the Single European Act. You accepted that when you accepted the treaty of Rome." The latest proposals on tobacco advertising may be contentious, but they are a case in point. My constituents expect me to have a meaningful input, but if the matter comes before the House, I doubt that it will be for us to make a decision. It will come on a recommendation or a directive from Europe, and there will be nothing that the House will be able to do about it. We shall be presented with a directive, and that will be that.

Much was made at Maastricht and in subsequent discussions about our stand against total acceptance of the social chapter. That is all very well, but there is no need for us to have a discussion on it. We had already sold the pass by signing the Single European Act. All that Europe need do is produce directives under that Act. We do not need to bother with a social chapter at all. Again, that would be that. There need be nothing anti-European in all that, but a degree of healthy scepticism is essential when dealing with some of our partners in Europe. We have seen what some French farmers do to our sheep when they are over there.

Those hon. Members who served on the Select Committee on Agriculture and other Select Committees know that other countries in Europe subsidise industries. It is difficult to pinpoint or to give examples. Those countries are the first to accuse us of being anti-communautaire but, in reality, they are the first to look after their own interests, regardless of what they signed up for at Maastricht. We will be the ones to conform; they will point the finger at us, and yet go their own way.

I wonder how many of the leaders of the other 11 nations of Europe have discussed with their Parliaments, in the way that we have discussed with ours last December and now, their commitment to so many things—for example, to a single European currency. Has the average farm worker or shopkeeper in France, Germany or Italy had discussions with his leaders on whether the franc, the mark or the lira will be abolished in favour of a different currency? I rather doubt it. Even if they did decide to do so, I think that they would ignore the commitment completely. When this country signs up, it means it. It does not sign up and think that it can ignore the commitments that it made if things do not work out.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister came away with an unfettered right for Britain to take its own decision on when and whether to join a single European currency. It will not be for this Parliament to decide, but when it is decided, I hope that the House will consider giving the people the right to decide, through a referendum on Britain's currency. The people ought to be sovereign on that matter, not Ministers and Members of this House.

I was heartened to read in Mrs. Margaret Thatcher's speech at the Hague at the weekend her criticism of government by the Commission. I hope that Europe's leaders will hesitate long and hard before they allow civil servants to take decisions in the name of the people. In this country we have a long tradition that, while suggestions, ideas and proposals may come from think tanks, civil servants and others, the decisions are made by those who take responsibility for them in the House and afterwards at the ballot box.

One of my greatest frustrations is having to tell my electors, in correspondence and personally, that there is nothing that I can do about a proposal because a decision has already been taken somewhere else—albeit by Ministers, one of whom is a Member of the House—that there is nothing that anyone can do because the decision has been taken outside these shores, so there is no point in writing to me.

It would be reprehensible to extend the concept of ministerial decision to Commission decision. It would emasculate our position as Members of Parliament and it would deprive the decision-makers of that essential element in any democracy—accountability to those who put us here. That is my paramount message to my right hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, whose views on the matter I generally share.

I remain sceptical and slightly unhappy about the commitment of the other eleven to our immigration and anti-terrorist laws. Other countries with shared borders do not share the same concerns with us on the question. The Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs have confirmed openly that the Bill will not prevent us from having our own anti-immigration laws.

I hope that that is the case. I regret the likely possibility that our laws on immigration, such as we pass, may be challenged in the European Court. That is reprehensible, and I hope that we will fight hard should we be taken before that court. It is easy for nationals from other countries to get in here—Africans can come here via Italy or via Macao and Portugal. I look for a firm commitment from the Government and from the other 11 states on the protection of immigration controls.

I support the Prime Minister's aims at Maastricht. I shall support the Bill without equivocation, and I will do so on behalf of my constituents. I will take much on trust, probably more so than I have ever done in my time in the House. I believe that that trust is not misplaced, or I would not join the Government in the Lobby tonight. However, I pray that we have got it right—an anxiety shared by everyone who has spoken. I am anxious that our people are not let down on the fundamental questions that I have raised. With those reservations, I support the Government.

2.55 am

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): May I add my congratulations to those that you have received, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment? In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham), I hear the distant sounds of the "No" campaign. If I had been told 20 years ago that at some time in the future I would speak here in support of closer union within the European Community, I would have been slightly surprised, to put it mildly.

In common with many of my hon. Friends, I was never anti-European, but 20 years ago we had some concerns about the EC—and some concerns remain. We must recognise that changes have occurred since we entered the EC. The European political atmosphere outside the Community has changed. The boundaries of the Community have changed and are likely to do so again. There is genuine public support across Europe for moves towards greater co-operation, integration and unification. Those moves have gathered pace and strength in recent years.

The current situation offers the House enormous opportunities, provided that we are willing to accept them. I shall support the reasoned amendment tabled by my right hon. and hon. Friends, because I believe that it offers the best way in which to achieve the greater unification that will benefit the British people. We must take advantage of the available opportunities.

The issue of European union is not just a matter of monetary union. The treaty refers to progress on economic growth, employment and regional policy. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) that the treaty puts insufficient emphasis on those other issues; far too much emphasis is placed on monetary union. There is little evidence that the Government have seriously tried to argue the case for those other issues. Their effort seems to have been directed at trying to exclude the country from developments on the social, defence and foreign policies.

I have three objections to the treaty. First, I accuse the Government of opting out on many serious matters that affect all our constituents. Secondly, the Government have displayed a half-hearted involvement in social, defence and foreign policy developments. Thirdly, they have failed to ensure that the process towards European union and the results of that process will be subject to accountability to the people who elect us.

As some hon. Friends have already said, it is a disgrace that the Government should have opted out of the social chapter. That is a denial of the rights of employees in this country and undermines equality. Not only social but economic issues are involved. Are the Government seriously telling us that, if the conditions in the social chapter were imposed on British industry, they would make our industry so uncompetitive that we could not compete with other industrialised countries that are prepared to implement the social chapter? If they saying that our economy is weaker than Germany's, I could accept that; but are they saying that this country could not afford to give its workers the same rights as those of Spain, Portugal and Greece? Is the economy that they run so weak that those rights cannot be afforded our workers?

I accuse the Government of being half-hearted and of opting out on a single currency. It is nonsense to pretend that the Parliaments of other European countries will not vote on a single currency—of course they will—but we must recongnise that a single currency will eventually happen and that this country will adopt it. In the meantime, the opt-out clause in the treaty removes our chance to influence and shape that future and, in particular, to argue the case for wider convergence criteria before a single currency is introduced. Perhaps, however, the Government believe that we shall not adopt a single

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currency because their economic management will not achieve the convergence criteria, limited though they are in the treaty. That is for them to answer.

Ultimately, the most serious issues of all, on which my hon. Friend the Member for Neath touched, are those of sovereignty and accountability. There has been much talk about the sovereignty of this Parliament. I challenge that concept, because ultimate sovereignty rests not in this House but with the people, who give us the right to exercise power on their behalf. Equally, they can give a European Parliament, regional assemblies or local authorities that power. It is simply a matter of finding the right level at which to exercise power on any individual issue.

All other things being equal, the best level of government is that which is nearest to those affected by it. In this debate some hon. Members have placed far too much emphasis on what is little more than a narrow-minded attempt to hang on to power in this House irrespective of what is happening in the wider world. We must recognise that, in the future, power will inevitably be transferred from this House to a European Parliament, and also in the other direction, toward regional assemblies and local authorities. Those changes will come in the next 20 or 30 years.

Thus, the issue of sovereignty is not about sovereignty within this Parliament but about accountability—or lack of accountability—and the exercise of power. If there is no locus for elected representatives in the decision-making process, true accountability cannot exist.

On the proposed creation of a European central bank, article 107 of the treaty is an abdication of political responsibility. To have an independent bank that is unaccountable under any circumstances to any elected representatives is to undermine the sovereignty of people who cannot influence vital monetary and interest rate policies. That is what really constitutes giving away sovereignty. Elected representatives would not be able to influence decisions at any stage. That power has been given away and, as I understand it, the Government have done nothing to prevent that. Instead, through the opt-out arrangements that they have negotiated, they have given away their authority to exercise their influence on future decisions.

Where is the best place for decisions to be made? The Government make a great play of trying to protect this Parliament's right to take decisions, and not allowing them to drift up towards Europe. I accept that many decisions are best dealt with at national level. Equally, other decisions are best taken at regional or local level. Contrary to what is happening in the rest of Europe, I see no evidence of this Government being prepared to accept the process of devolved government.

In the first draft of the proposal for the Committee of the Regions the phrase "local authorities" was used to describe the organisations with responsibility for appointing representatives to that committee. In subsequent drafts, the phrase "local authorities" was changed to "local bodies". It would be nonsense if our Government nominated representatives to the Committee of the Regions so that representatives of the Council of Ministers could consult with their nominees on the Committee. That will not happen anywhere else in Europe.

If people are worried about centralisation, they should be anxious not about centralisation towards a European Parliament—a fear that is often mentioned—but about a Government who cannot tolerate any view in this country other than their own. They cannot tolerate within their own boundaries the principle and practice of subsidiarity, and cannot accept the meaning of the word "pluralism".

Given the Government's attitude to the regions and local authorities, it is not surprising that there is no great emphasis on regional or structural funds.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: As I am short on vocabulary, will the hon. Gentlemen tell me what "pluralism" means?

Mr. Betts: I would interpret the word pluralism as a recognition that there are different views and different strands of opinion in our country, and it is perfectly proper to have various approaches to decisions and even different decisions in separate parts of the country which are affected by a variety of issues. The creation of regional assemblies and proper local democracy in our country would allow for varied responses to regional and local problems. I would welcome such a development, but clearly Conservative Members would not.

It is not surprising that there is no reference to regional or structural funds, but I would argue strongly that to have an effective and fair common monetary and economic policy, we must have a counter-balance to the working of free economic forces to protect the poorer and peripheral parts of our country. I trust that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) understands the need to defend the country in which he represents a constituency.

I am extremely worried that, if we do not give proper emphasis to structural and regional funds, we will not have the power to stop the inverted polo effect: we will have a prosperous centre and poverty-stricken fringes. We cannot allow that to happen.

The treaty is a classic missed opportunity. Europe is taking steps of historical importance. I do not belive that history will judge the Government's role in that process kindly. They have left our people out of crucial developments such as the social chapter. They have sold us short and denied us the opportunity to influence and shape our future in terms of a European currency and the criteria for convergence.

Most importantly of all, they have failed to protect the right of our people to accountable government, underpinned by a real commitment to the practice of subsidiarity operating within our national boundaries as well as beyond them.

3.9 am

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I have not a scintilla of doubt about my voting intentions tomorrow night. I shall be right to vote against the Bill, and I shall do so for many reasons.

First, the case has not been made. More importantly, there has not been sufficient public debate on the issues, the arguments and the consequences which stem from those issues. Progress within the European Community to date has been less than satisfactory, and the prospects for the future are no brighter.

I am particularly worried that the attempts to define the meaning of subsidiarity have been inadequate, especially in respect of its effects on the United Kingdom. I consider

the Maastricht treaty to be a poor deal for British democracy because it ends the sovereign right of the Westminster Parliament to tax and to spend. It is a poor deal for the British people, because their democratically elected representatives will increasingly be seen to have had their influence over the nation's affairs neutered.

I further believe that the treaty is a poor deal for my party, whose endorsement of a treaty which institutionalises socialism will in the fullness of time be seen as a negation both of its philosophy and of its better judgment. The treaty denies many fundamental principles of our party and its philosophy, because it will take monetary policy out of national control, it will cede control over fiscal policy—that is in article 99—and it will establish beyond peradventure that perceived inequalities within the Community will be eliminated not by the opportunity to create greater prosperity in a free and enlarged market, but by massive public expenditure. Given the authorship of the treaty, that should come as no surprise.

What is more remarkable, though, is that the awesomeness of these proposals causes Labour Members to oppose the Bill, which is much nearer their philosophy than mine. Doubtless they recognise, as I do, the effect of the treaty on the Members of this House and on the political parties that we represent. Stripped of power to influence or decide matters of state, we shall have created the classic recipe for failure: responsibility resting with a body of people who do not have the authority to discharge that responsibility in full measure.

This will result in public disillusionment with politicians and with people's capacity to obtain satisfaction through their elected representatives. In the fullness of time, that disillusionment will turn to frustration and anger, which will lead ultimately to the rejection of established political leadership, traditional party loyalties and the whole body politic. To pick up a point made by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts), that is the serious question facing us now: are we prepared to put our signature to a treaty which will erode the power and influence of Members of this House to such an extent that they are incapable of delivering the natural and legitimate aspirations of their constituents? Our constituents look to us to obtain redress; if the only satisfaction that we can give them is to say that the matter is out of our hands, it will not be long before they begin to wonder why they voted for us at all.

The circumstances in which nationalism asserts itself are not hard to recognise, and we ignore them at our peril. If we consider the course of world history, we see that the failure of federalism is well documented—in Africa, Canada, the Caribbean, Russia, and now in western Europe, in Yugoslavia. We are foolish to ignore the lessons of history. Federalism has failed not because it was more responsive to the natural and legitimate demands of people but because it denied them those aspirations.

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me one sentence at least? He cited the example of Yugoslavia, but that is an unreasonable criticism of federalism. Yugoslavia was a centralised, communist state with the appearance of federalism but it had nothing to do with genuine federalism.

Mr. Gill: My point is no less valid because of what the hon. Gentleman just said. He has admitted that the weakness in that state was its great centralisation, which denied the people that to which they aspired. That is the trait which runs through the failure of all the federalist states—the failure to allow people their natural and legitimate aspirations.

I invite right hon. and hon. Members to consider the history of the Union to which we already belong, that of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is an economic and political union which has a single currency, common laws, a directly elected sovereign Parliament and a constitutional monarchy.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: And a common language.

Mr. Gill: I shall come to that. Does anyone seriously believe that all is sweetness and light within the existing Union? Surely not. There are recognisable stresses and strains, which are plain to see despite the fact that, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) said, we are all bound by a common history, common interests and, above all, a common language. Even those common bonds are not enough.

For too long, the Union has been preserved by the transfer of funds from the richer country to the three poorer countries. Similarly, that is the cornerstone of the European Community's policy. The European Community will secure the compliance of the poorer regions at the expense of the richer ones, and it is bound to fail. There must be more finesse, a defter touch, more responsiveness to human nature and less emphasis on the price of cauliflowers and the quality of sheep carcases.

Hon. Members do not fully understand that, although independent nation states might agree on a principle—for example, free trade or mutual defence—reaching agreement on practical detail within a disparate group will continue to defy the wisdom of Solomon. I invite hon. Members to consider the instance of NATO, our defence organisation which was founded in 1949. Nearly 50 years later, we still have not managed to standardise and harmonise many essential components of that defence in terms of the equipment and weaponry on which our defence has depended. It is easy for nations to come together and to agree on the major principle in, for example, defence, but it is very much more difficult for them then to agree on the detail of which aeroplanes or munitions should be the standard.

To change the subject, another of my concerns is for the rule of law. In the United Kingdom, we have always has a great respect for the law and, by and large, the British people are a law-abiding race. Why is that? It is because our law has been established not by diktat or decree but by the consent of the people through their duly elected representatives.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: With great respect, we have two systems of law in this country. If English law had been as sensible as the system of Scottish law, none of the embarrassments of recent decisions, letting those who were convicted be unconvicted, would have occurred. If the convictions had occurred in Scotland, first, if they were wrong, the defendants would not have been convicted; secondly, they would not have been unconvicted.

Mr. Gill: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for his intervention. I say in all sincerity that we have much to learn from the diversity that we currently enjoy. One of the objections that many of us have in relation to the treaty

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is that it would destroy the diversity and richness built up over centuries of tradition, custom and practice. We sacrifice that at our peril.

Mr. Wareing: Will the hon. Gentleman explain how the rule of law operates in the United Kingdom when we consider it against the background of what happens to those convicted of not paying the poll tax and what happens to companies such as Sainsbury and Tesco which defy the law on Sunday trading?

Mr. Gill: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned the community charge because I intended to raise the matter. We have respect for the law in this country—that is the great strength of our system—because it is made by the democratically elected representatives of the people in this free Parliament. If the law proves subsequently to have been defective, unacceptable or unsatisfactory, those same democratically elected representatives in this Westminster Parliament can change it. That is exactly what happened to the community charge legislation.

In contrast, law in the Community is not made by directly elected representatives. Laws are proposed and promoted by non-elected people, by the members of the Commission. National input into that legislation is limited to the influence of one Minister among 12, a number which will soon become greater. It is a limited influence that the House, through one Minister, can have upon proposed Community legislation. As the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Harvey) has said, in the majority of cases, and perhaps in all cases in future, European Community law will take precedence over domestic law.

It is stated throughout the treaty that the law which is proposed will be irrevocable. That makes what we are considering tonight very much more serious than our consideration of domestic legislation, which is a feature of the House most of the time.

I fear that there could be a lack of respect for law for two reasons. First, legislation emanating from Europe will increasingly fail to gain public acceptance. That will persuade an erstwhile law-abiding nation to become selective in its compliance with the law. Secondly, in the commercial sector such selective obedience may become a financial necessity.

I have confined my remarks to the generalities of that which is before the House. The specifics will be debated in Committee, when clearer definitions will be sought. In the final analysis, as many right hon. and hon. Members have recognised, interpretation and decision will be a matter for the European Court, not for our Ministers and not for national Governments. Nevertheless, the principles at stake have the capacity to alter our whole national life and the way in which we are governed.

Those are all matters on which the British people might reasonably be expected to have a view. Indeed, they have a right to be consulted, and until they have been so consulted we have no mandate to accept the conditions of the treaty. If the inalienable democratic rights of free-born Britons are to be devalued or depreciated in such a profound and fundamental way, the case for a referendum is irresistible.

3.25 am

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I must say what a personal pleasure it is to see you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Chair. We look forward to your presiding over many sessions of Parliament and many speeches at 3.30 am.

I wish to start with the point on which the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) finished—a referendum. At the general election, the three major parties—Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat—all campaigned on a pro-European programme. It would be extraordinary if, only a few weeks after a general election, we were to hold a referendum and return to the people with the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrats all still supporting a "yes" vote.

During the 1975 referendum, I was on a train going from London to Newcastle and I spoke to the people in my compartment. I asked one man how he would vote and he said, "The Prime Minister Harold Wilson and the Leader of the Opposition Ted Heath are telling me to vote in support of the referendum, while Tony Benn and Enoch Powell are telling me to oppose it, and on that basis I know how I am going to vote." If we were to have a referendum on this issue, how would we explain it to the people? How would they view a referendum that was supported by all three major parties?

Mr. Gill: The point at stake is one to which the hon. Gentleman has already drawn attention, which is that at the general election the three major parties all campaigned on the same European platform, so the electorate had no choice on an issue that will have profound and significant effects on our constitution and the constitutional rights of the individual citizen. This matter needs to be lifted out of party politics and presented to the people as a separate, free-standing issue on which they can make up their own minds. It is obvious that there are divisions in all parties on the issue, but the fact remains that at the general election the electorate were given no choice.

Mr. Bell: I follow the hon. Gentleman's logic. However, he argued forcefully and cogently for the rule of law and for the constitution, and it is part of our constitution that Governments are elected to govern. We must all respect the decision of the electorate. Unfortunately, for the fourth time running the Labour party has to accept that decision. Whether we like it or not, we succumb to it, we come to this House and we play our part in holding the Government accountable. We respect the Executive's right to govern us. So how do we then say that we no longer want to do that and instead want a referendum? It is a cop-out for Parliament and for the Government of the day to accept a referendum.

Mrs. Currie: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those hon. Members who so strongly argue for the sovereignty of the House are the ones who tend to argue for a referendum outside the House?

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for making my point for me. I do not want to spend all my time on the subject of a referendum, but it is odd that it comes up from time to time when Opposition Members are accused of being unprincipled because we do not support the concept of a referendum. However, there does seem to be unanimity between some hon. Members on that.

Listening to the debate, I am reminded in one sense of Dean Inge who once said, "I have had a great many

problems, most of which never happened." Hearing the contributions from hon. Members on both sides of the House on the EC one wonders why 11 nation states have been willing to enter into the agreements at Maastricht. Why do other states such as Sweden, Finland, Norway and now Switzerland, a federal state, want to join us? Why do the eastern European states aspire to join us? If the consequences are as dire as many hon. Members have said, why have so many other nation states signed up?

I lived in France for 17 years and I visit the continent regularly and see the prosperity there, far greater than it was 20 years ago, and certainly after the war, and the material benefits to all. One sees a great desire to continue the economic progress within a democratic framework. The hon. Member for Ludlow spoke of public disillusionment, but that disillusionment can come only if we see a failure within the EC, its institutions and its economic progress. For as long as there is such democratic and economic progress, the British people will accept the changes which Maastricht brings about and which the treaty of Rome brought about way back in 1957-58.

Mr. Gill: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that other nation states wishing to join the Community do not do so out of any sense of altruism, but out of a sense of self-interest? When I argue about the terms of the treaty, I do so from the standpoint of trying to get what I believe is in the best interests of Britain and the British people whom I represent. That is my motivation; it is no different from that which drives other nations in seeking membership of the Community.

Mr. Bell: Self-interest motivated Britain. I remember the debates of 1957 when Anthony Eden and Mr. Macmillan said that we would not be a part of the EC. I was astonished at the time because we had fought a series of wars on the continent going back 300 or 400 years in order to prevent any nation on the continent gaining a supremacy which might challenge us, yet there we were turning our backs on a treaty of Rome, signed by six countries, which would create the pre-eminence and dominance over us. It took a little while for us to understand that as a nation state our self-interest lay in Europe, which is why we moved towards signing the treaty and finally signed in 1972.

We have seen our self-interest in the EC and, however much we might differ on certain aspects of Maastricht, the treaty of Rome or the Single European Act, the thrust is that we go towards the new Europe. To return to the point made by the hon. Member for Ludlow, I believe that the British people want us to go forward because they see the benefits of participation in this new European framework.

The hon. Member for Ludlow made an interesting point about federalism. As I have already said, Switzerland now wants to join the EC and it is a federalist country. There is nothing wrong with the federalism of the United States, despite all the conflicts between states which have existed there for many years, and which sometimes have to be reconciled by the Supreme Court. There are ways of making people work and live together in a harmonious and democratic framework, in which democratic effervescence contributes to debate and does not detract from it. I am not entirely clear that there is anything detrimental about federalism—which may not anyway be what Europe is all about ultimately.

The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) made an interesting speech, and offered anecdotal evidence about the difficulties surrounding European directives. In fact, although we cannot alter them, they must all come before the House for approval.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) made a memorable maiden speech. One of the nice things about debates at the start of a new Parliament is that one hears so many maiden speeches. My hon. Friend referred to the ghosts of yesteryear and to the 1975 referendum. Listening to some of the contributions, I was reminded of Francois Villon:

"But where are the snows of yesteryear?"

They seem to be all around us. Many of our colleagues look to the past. My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) argued for devaluation under the exchange rate mechanism. Labour devalued in 1948, and lost the 1951 election. A Labour Government devalued again in 1967, and went on to lose the 1970 election. I have no idea why any of my right hon. or hon. Friends should argue for devaluation, when it has cost us so dearly in the past. Every devaluation in France since 1929—not that I was around then—produced short-term relief followed by serious inflationary consequences that wiped out the benefits.

At the Labour party conference in 1976, James Callaghan stated clearly that the days of deficit spending were over, and that Britain could no longer spend its way out of a recession. Some of my hon. Friends argue that more than 3 per cent. of gross domestic product should be borrowed. The treaty is against excessive public deficits, and this side of the House also ought to be against them.

Some people seem to be caught in a time warp of past ideas. Much is said about the bankers' ramp, which dates back to 1931 and the times of Ramsay MacDonald. Lord George Brown put the gnomes of Zurich to rest in 1964. Nevertheless, we are still told that someone, somewhere, is impinging on our national sovereignty.

There is talk also of the effect that an independent central bank would have on Europe. At present, as we all know, we are entirely dependent on the Bundesbank. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer wanted to reduce interest rates by half of 1 per cent. a couple of weeks ago, everyone looked to the Bundesbank to see whether, because of the difficulties in the east, Germany was likely to increase its interest rates, or whether it would be safe to reduce our own.

When the Group of Seven met in Washington recently and asked the Bundesbank to drop its interest rates to benefit the world economy, it refused to do so, in the interests of Germany. The French want a central bank because they do not want the fate of their economy to rest on the decisions of the Bundesbank. Why should we do so for ever?

One of my hon. Friends said that the treaty is not clear when it comes to a central bank, but the protocol makes it plain who will serve as the members of its board and as its governors, and how ECOFIN will supervise and direct the bank.

So what do we prefer? Do we prefer the Bundesbank telling us what to do, or do we prefer a European central bank in which we would have some input, and in which we would, in a sense, pool our resources? We would stop speculation on our currency, and would build up resources rather than relying on the difficulties, or otherwise, of

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Germany. I have no difficulty in supporting the concept of a European central bank, within the framework of what has been signed up to in the Maastricht treaty.

As for the amount of sovereignty that we are giving away, as the Prime Minister said earlier, the actual terms of convergence are so stiff—so difficult—that they are unlikely ever to be met in the short run. Given their application to inflation, economic growth and employment levels, it would be very difficult for them to be met from one end of the Community to the other.

Some of my hon. Friends said that not enough—or nothing at all—is made of employment levels. In fact, article 2 of the Maastricht treaty refers to high levels of employment, because high levels of employment must accompany the growth and increased productivity that we want, and must be a serious element in the non-inflationary, sustainable growth that is at the heart of the treaty.

The treaty contains a series of objectives that represent the harmonious and balanced development of economic activities that John F. Kennedy once described as

"all boats lifting on a rising tide".

As I said earlier, all the economies involved are doing well, and the public will not suffer aggravation. We shall see sustainable, non-inflationary growth and a framework in which we can all look forward to working.

We hear a good deal about the federal concept and the "United States of Europe". Indeed, we hear a good deal about all kinds of idealistic visions of what Europe will be. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) even spoke in one debate of the inclusion of Russia, which went as far as Vladivostok. All that is desirable, but there is no federal Europe appearing on the horizon. There is no United States of Europe; there is a modern Europe—a new kind of Europe.

My hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) talked about socialism within the context of Europe. That is why we want a social charter—to give a socialist dimension to offset the orientation towards the free market, the social market, the single market or whatever we want to call it. Labour Members do not believe that it is possible to have an essentially free-market society without social provision.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) raised the issue of socialism with my hon. Friend. My right hon. and hon. Friends must define what we mean by socialism, and by democratic socialism, within the context of the age in which we live. Let me quote an 18th-century poet:

"See how dark the backward stream,
A little moment passed so smiling."

We are always looking backwards. We have had a lot of "narrow nationalism", if I may quote the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing). Let us look forward to a new concept and a new kind of society; a new willingness to work together; a new kind of democracy—with the problems, with the effervescence, with the debates and with the arguments, but nevertheless looking forward to the new kind of Europe that I believe will be of benefit to us as a society and to our children yet to come.

3.43 am

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): The crux of the matter is this: the point of decision-making is becoming further and further removed from the electorate. It is for that very reason that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister decided that the answer lay in article 3b, which deals with subsidiarity.

I wish to deal with one or two of the arguments surrounding the article. It applies only to matters on which the EC does not have exclusive competence—and that is a diminishing area. Will the Minister give me the list of the areas of exclusive competence that another Minister refused to give to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing)? If this is a diminishing area, it will not have a great deal of influence on future events. To put it realistically, what is the value of this principle in those sectors from which it is excluded? In agriculture and fisheries, 90 per cent. of the decisions are ceded to the EC anyway. In trade and industry, between 50 and 60 per cent. of decisions are made by the EC. Monetary policy is on the brink of being transferred to the central banking system. I know that we shall have an opportunity to make our views known on that in two or three years' time. The Commission has assumed a big role in the decision-making process on the environment, particularly with carbon taxes and ways to deal with ozone layer problems.

Therefore, we must look critically at the use of article 3b. We have to work out who will decide that the matter cannot be sufficiently achieved by the member state, and that it is better achieved by the Community. Surely it is not the state in question, because it will be disregarded. It will be a matter for the European Court of Justice. The court will put a European interpretation on it, and the European interpretation could be entirely different from that of the United Kingdom.

The most extraordinary thing about the United Kingdom is that, traditionally, expenditure and taxation were decided by the House of Commons. This has always been the people's Parliament. In future, these matters will not be decided here because responsibility for many of them may be transferred to Europe. When one sees areas of competence gradually being transferred to EC institutions, as we saw in 1986 and 1992, and will see with the further revision in 1996, we must ask ourselves what will be left to which this principle can still apply. I hope that the Minister will consider this carefully.

The former Home Secretary dealt with article 8, which concerns border controls. He said that it would be desirable if this matter were left until after the revision of Maastricht in 1996. However, the European Court does not work in that way. There is no appeal against its decisions. It has been given powers, under article 172, with unlimited jurisdiction over penalties. It can impose considerable penalties on the United Kingdom if it does not agree with the provisions that the court has decided. In the end, it will be a body enacting law on all the decisions that come before it. It will be a legislation-making process. We cannot put undue confidence in article 3b. It could let us down seriously.

The balance of power between Westminster and Brussels has changed. This is a fact of life that we all accept. This has happened because, in certain sectors, European law takes precedence over UK law. There is the extension of EC competence to newer areas and sectors.

There has been an increase in qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers and the intergovernmental arrangements. Finally, additional powers have been granted to the European Parliament.

I am therefore entitled to ask what is to be the role of local Parliaments. In evidence to the Select Committee, the Foreign Secretary attempted to define that role, but he did not make any positive statement. Therefore, I hope that when the Minister or the Foreign Secretary winds up the debate we shall be told what that role is to be.

My questions will probably be ruled out as entirely wrong, but the public have the right to know and not to be deceived. If they are deceived, they can live for years in their own disillusionment. Is the role of the United Kingdom Parliament simply to scrutinise Community and intergovernmental law? Is it simply to legislate in the residual areas remaining to Westminster, which will diminish further as additional concessions are made? Will the United Kingdom Parliament become a secondary legislator on a great number of important issues and be subordinate to the European Parliament, or to unelected bodies such as the Council of Ministers or the Commission? Finally, is the House of Commons simply to note the agreements negotiated in intergovernmental committees and to deliberate upon them?

I hope that I am wrong. It would be a humiliating result if this ancient institution, which has been going since 1185 if my memory is correct——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Since 1707.

Sir Trevor Skeet: That was the Act of Union. I am going back still further, to Simon de Montfort's Parliament.

It would be humiliating if this great institution were to be entirely destroyed. I do not think that I am right, but I ask the Minister to give me a definition of the role of local Parliaments. The public want to know what that role is likely to be.

The intensification of government is not good for a free country. In 1900 there were 65 public Acts. In 1990-91 there were 69 public Acts and another 20 private Acts. In 1900 there were 926 statutory instruments. In 1990-91 there were 2,952. That is now supplemented by European Community legislation. In 1990-91 there were 223 binding regulations, 57 directives and 154 decisions that are also binding on the country at which they are directed. That is a total of 434, on top of United Kingdom legislation. Thus we have a plethora of legislation which confuses rather than illuminates the understanding of United Kingdom citizens. Although the word "federation" has been dropped from the treaty, its imprint has been firmly left there, a point already made by many other hon. Members.

Before I refer, finally, to qualified majority voting, perhaps I may make just one suggestion. Communism was formed in 1916, and it began to disintegrate in 1992. It took 70 years for the great transition to occur. We entered Europe in 1972, and in 1992 we are making irrevocable changes which could lead to a different type of House of Commons. Decisions may no longer be taken here; they may be taken elsewhere by unelected bodies. Is it right that we should irrevocably take those decisions after only 20 years?

Mrs. Currie: I have been listening very carefully to my hon. Friend. What he is talking about happened a long time ago. What is now on offer to us is to strengthen the existing democratic institutions of Europe, including an elected Parliament, to which this country sends Members.

Sir Trevor Skeet: That may be so, but the European Parliament at present has limited authority. It has been given certain concessions by Maastricht, certainly, but it still has limited authority. If we are to concede full powers to the European Parliament we shall have no powers left here. We shall become a regional government. My hon. Friend cannot have it both ways.

Mrs. Currie: All Parliaments have limited powers. Lots of matters that we cannot interfere with go to local councils, for example. My hon. Friend is describing the democratic deficit. The answer is not to bewail the loss of power of this House but to ensure that the House to which our constituents send elected Members has the necessary powers, some of which are provided for in the Bill.

Sir Trevor Skeet: My hon. Friend does not seem to realise that we have a number of strata of Government. We have not only Members of the European Parliament, but Members of Parliament, county councils, district councils, parish councils and the lot. Over the years we have been further governed by intricate systems of the law. Are we morally much better? Is the nation more sound? I leave it to my hon. Friend to decide.

Qualified majority voting was introduced in 1986 and has been extended by Maastricht to foreign policy, immigration in 1996 and many other aspects. I shall briefly mention the consequences of that. The principle yields disproportionate influence to the smaller states. The four largest states in the EC—Britain, Germany, France and Italy—possess only 53 per cent. of the total votes yet contain 71 per cent. of the population and 78 per cent. of the GDP, while Greece, Ireland and Luxembourg have only 4.3 per cent. of the population and 13 per cent. of the total votes. To my way of thinking, that makes the system absolutely absurd, and the further we extend it the worse it will become.

Another point about the qualified majority voting system to which we are committed is that it is a burden on the larger states. That is because of social cohesion, as mentioned in article 130. The President of the Commission wants to lift expenditure in ecu from 66·6 billion, equal to £46 billion, to 87·5 billion at 1992 prices over five years. Half that sum is to be spent on Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland, and most of it is to be structural spending. The rest is to be spent on growing foreign policy commitments in eastern Europe, the former USSR, north Africa, and EEC infrastructure and research.

From the observations of my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), I understand that the European Parliament might effectively levy taxation to obtain additional revenue. The people of this country should be aware that that is a distinct possibility. The increased taxation that people will have to provide will be accompanied by less representation. The people affected will be the taxpayers of the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy. It is unique that the Spaniards said that they would agree to the ratification of the Maastricht treaty only on the basis that more money would be spent in their own country.

There are also problems about enlargement and the European Free Trade Association. Sweden, Norway, Finland, Switzerland and Austria involve problems on the

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neutrality issue. Turkey, Malta and Cyprus comprise the next group likely to join the Community. There will be a shortage of cash when they join and that will be a burden on the rest of the Community.

If my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is right, the next group to join might comprise Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. They already have an arrangement with the Community, but that is not ready for admission. We must then consider the three Baltic states, Yugoslavia comprising four independent states, and perhaps Romania, Bulgaria and the Ukraine. Can we not see the way contemporary Europe is going? If it lasts, it will be expensive. If it lasts, will it be wise for us to subscribe to it interminably? Being at the heart of Europe, can we bring influence to bear to direct it on the course that we consider desirable in the interests of the whole of Europe?

4.1 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It is a pleasure to see you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Chair and I look forward to addressing the house in future at 4 am under your supervision.

In a sense, we are discussing a series of lengthy and complex amendments to a written European constitution or the nearest thing that we have to a written European constitution. However, legally and formally, we are doing something entirely different: we are discussing a 25-line Bill which rubber stamps a series of amendments to treaties. The confusion between those tasks must be borne in mind. Are we constitution amenders or merely treaty supplicants? The only way that democrats can get out of that dichotomy is to get out from under the treaties entirely or to move beyond treaties to a proper European democratic constitution.

We are supposed to be examining a wide mixture of items. There are a series of amendments to the European Coal and Steel Community; provisions for the European Atomic Energy Community and a series of protocols, the most significant of which relate to the European central bank. There is also a protocol about the acquisition of second homes in Denmark. That is Denmark's opting-out procedure. That measure is also part of the Bill that we are debating.

The items that we will probably discuss most are the changes to the 1957 European Community treaty, which has already been amended on numerous occasions. We are now amending that treaty again. In its amended form the treaty now has about 280 articles. We have been asked to do a major scissors-and-paste job and change it dramatically.

On my count there are 44 articles to be replaced in total; six to replaced in part; nine to repealed in total; two to be repealed in part; 51 new articles to be added; and, in a series of blocks, 58 new articles replacing 36 old ones. It is a mammoth task merely to read all the material, because it has not been presented to us in such a way that we can properly examine it and see what the amended treaties, or something rather like an amended constitution, will look like. It is a peculiar procedure.

The few articles in the 1957 EEC provisions that are not amended include the series of articles on agriculture and the customs union. It might be that, if anything should be changed, it is the articles that tell us how the common agricultural policy should operate.

How can we see our way through all this material? We have done well in the sense that hon. Members have picked up many different items. But it is sometimes difficult to get to grips with the structures that we examine if there is no simplicity about them. I do not believe that we are supposed to get to grips with them. The opening speeches from both Front Benches seemed to be an attempt to have the bland leading the blind.

However, I grant that many hon. Members have not been blind to the measures before us. For example, we have just had a discussion about the position on subsidiarity. If the documents were proper constitutional material, a modern Parliament would expect to examine measures that were democratic and had what should go with democracy—a democratic simplicity and straightforward nature.

A characteristic of the American constitution is that it is easy to see what its principles are. I am aware that there are constitutions that are much longer than the American constitution. It has divisions and separations of power in different, clear categories. There is a procedure for amending the constitution which is very different from the game in which we are involved and from the great complexities that have come out of Maastricht and other revisions and perhaps will come out of future revisions. None of these things will be seen by me to be put right until we have a proper constitution for Europe and an amending procedure.

As a substitute for a fully federal constitution we have the tomfoolery and complexity of the principle of subsidiarity in articile 3b. It has already been asked who determines what is to be done on the basis of that principle. It is a question which I asked in a meeting of the Select Committee on European Legislation at which we interviewed the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones). In a subsequent answer by letter he stated:

> "It will be possible for any member state to object to a Commission initiative or to Community legislation, on the grounds of subsidiarity, citing Article 3b. Ultimately, the European Court of Justice could be called upon to adjudicate in such a dispute, but we expect the Article principally to have a deterrent effect."

The following procedure can be used to decide whether subsidiarity is operating. The European Commission and the avenues of Europe act upon it. If we dislike the measure we can go to the European Court and claim that subsidiarity is not acting in accordance with its principle, and the court then has to decide whether the principle of subsidiarity is operating. The court will be taking not merely legal and technical decisions, but political decisions about the areas where decision-making is legitimate at national level and those where it is legitimate at federal level. In those circumstances, the European Court will have a massively enhanced status and will be involving itself in matters that should not involve the legal profession, but should be for democratically elected politicians to decide.

In my criticism of the principle of subsidiarity I may arrive at a different position from that of other hon. Members, because I believe that the precise distinctions which could take place and which subsidiarity could provide are more clearly made within federal structures.

There could be federal structures within which this Parliament could be granted considerable powers. The European Court would decide where the dividing line should come, according to the overarching constitution, which might allow considerable decentralisation.

The principle of subsidiarity is also being referred to as an extra power being given to European Community institutions, on top of the areas of exclusive competence already included within the treaty. If many areas are already excluded from such consideration, why has the principle been put forward? It can now be applied only to areas that were not previously considered. So subsidiarity may potentially grant extra powers to the European Community and the principle does not guarantee support for a position that could be adopted within Parliament.

The claims of all the hon. Members representing Scottish and Welsh constituencies, who say that they want devolution and want to use subsidiarity for that end, are misconceived. If such a principle of subsidiarity operated within this Parliament, Parliament would have power over them.

The principle of subsidiarity needs to be examined very carefully and contrasted with the notion of democratic federalism, within which there would be clearly defined areas—despite the difficulties involved. Someone would have to hold the ring, and the courts could be brought in on various occasions, as they are in the United States of America.

Subsidiarity is a fog within which decision making passes to the more undemocratic institutions of the EC. The answer is to make those institutions as democratic as possible.

Whether the Maastricht treaty is adopted or rejected, and whether we have an opt-out or a set of opt-in provisions for the treaty, Maastricht is not good enough. We need a federal, social and democratic Europe.

Since moves towards the industrial revolution in this country, the working class, early labour movements, trade unions and progressive forces generally have always had to react to the developing structures of capitalism, and they have always acted as countervailing forces in that structure, attempting to promote their interests.

At one time the relevant political structure was that of the United Kingdom. The trade unions and other forces then had to struggle to obtain democracy and to use it as a means of achieving social welfare provisions. The fight for the vote by the Chartists and the suffragettes led to the introduction of legislation on education, pensions and the welfare state. The democratic process was the only way in which such changes could be introduced.

The position in Europe now is similar to that which existed here in the previous century. The massive technological revolution is changing the nature of capital and the terms of the structures governing Europe are becoming wider and wider. Those structures are largely democratically defective and therefore the forces for change must look to democracy as the means of improving social welfare provision as well as improving participation in that democratic process. Democracy is not just the means of achieving ends, but an aim in itself.

For democratic socialists, the claim that the EC represents a bankers' Europe and a capitalist club is just part of the truth. Democracy must be developed to change that. The Council of Ministers should not be allowed to continue—it is a bit like the arrangement that used to exist in the alliance between the Social Democrats and the Liberals. That alliance used to specialise in deals over the heads of party members about which they had no say. A similar system exists in the Council of Ministers, in fact it is worse, because at least some of the alliance's dealings were seen on television. The Council of Ministers meets in secret and heaven knows what deals are struck. All the decisions are over our heads.

Sir Russell Johnston: I know that it is 4.17 am but the hon. Gentleman's comments are getting extremely fanciful.

Mr. Barnes: I am not sure whether my comments are fanciful in relation to the old alliance or the Council of Ministers. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would agree that an air of democracy should be introduced into its dealings. Perhaps he did not like the analogy I drew, which referred to organisations with which he used to be associated.

The scrutiny procedures of the House are a farce. I am not suggesting that there is something wrong with the relevant Committees, the dedication of those involved in those procedures or with the manner in which the results of that scrutiny are fed to the House. Those procedures will always be a farce because they cannot have an effective say over EC directives and regulations. At best, the House can attempt to influence Ministers' actions at the Council of Ministers, but those meetings are equivalent to a secret conclave so we do not know what is done on our behalf. On many occasions our Ministers have been outvoted by weighted-majority decisions.

The relatively uncontrolled bureaucracy governing the Commission and the central bank should not be allowed to operate—that is unacceptable. The right way forward is a democratically elected European Parliament which would ultimately throw up a democratically appointed Government. In those circumstances, the openings for a national Parliament become quite significant. We are not moving towards a federal system but are part of a process that is leading to a non-democratic, unitary system in which bankers and bureaucrats have considerable control and great influence. The speech of the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) pointed me towards the development not of federalism but of unitary provision going increasingly towards the centre and away from this House.

We want clearly defined areas and borders which people are not allowed to invade from either side. That requires federal structures that can operate only in a democracy. The analogies with Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union are beside the point, because those systems were distortions of federalism. Federalism operates only in circumstances where democratic checks can be made to ensure that the system functions correctly.

The antithesis of the European system which we are already in, but are moving deeper into, is democratic and federal. It is a Europe that will exist for all its people through the democratic institutions that will develop. That is the agenda that we should seek, and it shows the inadequacies of the measures before us.

4.21 am

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Like the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), I am pleased to welcome you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Chair, but I wish that I was not doing so at 4.21 in the morning.

We have heard many excellent maiden speeches in this constructive debate on the Maastricht treaty. I shall single out two in particular, those of my constituency neighbours —first, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) and, secondly, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham). I enjoyed listening to both their contributions. They have shown themselves to be worthy successors of both Sir David Price and Chris Chope, of whom the House will have many fond memories. All the maiden speeches that we have heard during this debate, and the return speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson), have paid tribute to the predecessors of the hon. Members concerned. All newly elected Members have hard acts to follow but, on the basis of their speeches in this debate, they should have little difficulty in doing so with distinction.

There are few Second Reading debates in which it is not necessary to study the text of the Bill, but this is one. The Bill is very short, but it makes up for that by the weight of material that comes with it in the form of supporting documents some five inches deep. They represent some solid reading.

Yesterday I took a party of fifth formers from a comprehensive school in my constituency round the Palace of Westminster. Their visit left me in no doubt that they knew precisely what we were debating in the House today: their future and that of their children. They knew that the Bill was to ratify the Maastricht treaty on European union agreed on 1 December so that it could come into force on 1 January 1993.

What they did not know, and what I was able to tell them, was that the treaty needed ratification by all member states in order to be implemented, and that the failure of just one member state to ratify it would mean the collapse of the treaty. I hope that that does not happen, and so do the students.

Much reference has been made to 1975 and the referendum campaign. Similar circumstances prevail in this debate. In 1975 I had a gut feeling that we had been right to join Europe, and that the vote in favour of our entry would be based more on gut instinct that it was the correct action to take than on any detailed study of the consequences. Our attitude to the Bill will contain an element of trust. The alternatives are not promising, which is why I wholeheartedly support the Bill.

I believe that Britain had an advantage over our European partners at Maastricht as the principles on which the treaty is now based were set out by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in advance of the summit. He went to Maastricht with the clear backing of Parliament, following a robust debate and the endorsement of those principles. Some hon. Members will argue that, as the debate was guillotined, it may not have been conclusive, but I believe that some of the best debates in the House occur when a guillotine is imposed. There is no doubt that the sight of the scaffold concentrates the mind, and our debate before Maastricht was a good one.

This is not the time to deal with the minutiae of the Bill, but there is one amendment about which I have fundamental reservations—the one which changes the name of the European Economic Community to the European Community. The comon market characteristic has been the strength of the EEC to date and by dropping the word "economic" we risk losing sight of that principal objective. I believe that we could still combine the system of democratic accountability, which many hon. Members feel is so important, with a common market.

Today we are debating the principle of the United Kingdom's greater involvement in the European Community. I say "greater" because the real question is whether we wish to deepen the relationship between member states or widen the EEC's membership. My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) and the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) referred to the issue of whether we should widen or deepen the Community. I am aware that most of our partners in Europe have preferred to tackle the task of deepening the Community ahead of widening it, given that new members struggling to come to terms with the "acquis communautaire"—the Community's achievements—are unlikely to be enthusiastic for further change in the short term. Another fear among those who are most keen to move ahead with integration and a deepening of their relationship is that the arrival of new members may frustrate their plans. I believe that that is as good a reason as any for proceeding with the widening of the membership in preference to deepening it.

The Maastricht treaty was a success for Britain and a personal achievement for my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, whose delicate political and diplomatic strategy has mitigated most of Mr. Delors' federalist plans, while avoiding any break with our continental partners. There has been much discussion of the word "federal". The House must appreciate that when continentals refer to federalism they are thinking of a confederal idea, with which I agree much more than I do with the rigid structure that follows from the English interpretation of the word.

The holding of the general election so soon after the Maastricht treaty gives the Government the mandate that they require to proceed with ratification, subject to the consent of this House. Most Members will agree that in the recent election Britain's future role in the Community was not exactly the most important issue for electors. Over the years, it has been difficult to excite the electorate about this matter. That does not mean, however, that we should treat it lightly.

Many of us who are strongly pro-European are cautious about certain aspects of Europe's development —such as economic and monetary union, with a single currency and a central bank. That caution is shared by many outside the House. Convergence will be difficult to achieve; there are already signs of a multi-tier Europe, which may not be such a bad thing.

We were told that the Single European Act was not much more than a technicality, yet it is from that legislation that some of Britain's recent European troubles have stemmed, leading to confrontation with our EC partners. The most recent example was the Commission's working time directive, which aims to impose a maximum 48-hour working week. Why are the Government climbing down on that? Ministers have said that the directive would have a more severe impact on the United Kingdom than on other member states because of our different patterns of

employment—it is estimated that it could cost British industry more than £5 billion—so why are we agreeing to it?

The other problem arising from the Single European Act is the battle to retain controls at Britain's frontiers. I am glad that the Republic of Ireland—also an island—is equally firm about keeping effective border controls. If we are once more forced to bow before the European Court of Justice, at least that may hasten the day when we can introduce the compulsory carrying of identity cards here—a long overdue reform. Still, they cannot replace effective border controls as a way of controlling immigration. We should have both.

Those of us fortunate enough to attend the annual dinner of the CBI two nights ago were left in no doubt as to British business's attitude to the European Community and the Maastricht treaty. The completion of the single market is seen as the priority, but British businesses want a single market that works—with level playing fields, and with our partners enforcing EC directives as we do. They want a market in which the barriers to business are removed, in which the goal of a single currency will help them—provided that the Government maintain the criteria for achieving that: firm budgetary discipline, a reduction of Government borrowing, bringing down inflation and moving into the narrow band of the exchange rate mechanism.

I heard no call for stage three of EMU; it was almost as if business was saying that it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive. Business also wants greater harmonisation of the market. I do not see why we could not start by adopting a standard form of Euro-retail prices index. While levelling the European playing field, business wants similar fiscal regimes and state aid policies to prevail. If our European partners are slow to fall into line, it might just be possible for us in Britain to indulge in a little sin ourselves while converting the rest of the Community to virtue.

The business community needs the Government to resist the proposals on labour and social regulation, and I agree.

The social chapter is the opposite of the other achievement of Maastricht, which was the inclusion in the treaty of the principle of subsidiarity whereby action is taken at Community level only when that is more effective than action taken at national level. It is a pity that we did not manage to insert that provision into the single market through the Single European Act. If we had, we might have avoided all the problems that we have had over Arbroath smokies and British bangers, which could have been against the law. The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) mentioned prawn-flavoured crisps which, I gather, are now back on the menu.

There is no doubt that Britain's membership of the EC has benefited us in terms of investment and trade. The fact that nearly half of the American and Japanese investment in Europe has come to the United Kingdom proves that the political and economic climate created by the Government is the most attractive for inward investors in the European Community. That confidence in Britain flagged last year as the opinion polls predicted a Labour victory in the general election, but it immediately began to pick up again once my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had his continued occupation of No. 10 Downing street confirmed on the morning of 10 April. Had the Conservatives lost the general election, the inward investment would have almost certainly moved to the continent and I hate to think of the effect on jobs of such a flight of capital.

Last December's treaty will be seen as a turning point in the history of the Community. The British Government have succeeded in tilting the European agenda in their direction, away from creeping centralisation. In the six months from 1 July, my right hon. Friend and his Cabinet colleagues will have another historic opportunity to influence events, and I am delighted that my right hon. Friend has pledged his determination to make a priority the enlargement of the Community, incorporating the EFTA countries and, perhaps by the turn of the century, Hungary, Czechoslavakia and Poland.

While that is being achieved, a Conservative Government will preside over the completion of the single market about which, barring difficulties over working weeks and frontier controls, the entire country will be able to cheer. While the leadership of France and Germany suddenly look weaker, our Government are taking the lead in Europe. That is where we should—and, under my right hon. Friend's leadership, shall—remain. When we vote, I hope that the House will resist the amendment and support Second Reading.

4.37 am

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I am grateful, even at this late stage, to have caught your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, in this important debate. As I am once again joining in towards the tail end of our deliberations on this subject, I shall keep my remarks brief, not least because whatever I was going to say will inevitably have been said by my colleagues, sometimes better than I could have done myself.

The question that I pose to my colleagues who remain here is what are we doing participating in this debate at 4.38 am? Unless we are posturing or pontificating, we are putting our view on the record so that, if the treaty goes horribly wrong and if the concept of the European Community goes horribly wrong in five or 10 years' time and we are lucky enough still to represent our existing constituencies, they will not ask what we did—did we consider the question, did we contribute or even read the treaty?

To put my view on the record, I have read the treaty. I do not yet understand it, but although I was once a keen and proud European, there are things in it that would now make me one of the most sceptical. I therefore give due notice to the Government Whips who are on duty that when we examine the Bill in Committee and consider some of the things that are set out in this illustrious treaty, I may not be able to support the Government.

We are discussing whether to give the Bill a Second Reading. We shall give it a Second Reading on the basis of a mandate that the House gave my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in December to go to Maastricht on terms that he had already laid out to the House. We cannot go backwards. There has been much talk about sovereignty and of what we do in this Parliament, but much of that was dealt with, in effect, when the House enacted the Single European Act. That brought an end to much of the posturing. That Act cannot be abrogated unless we move as a Community to change it.

The Maastricht treaty introduces into the Community important aspects which I think will be to Britain's

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advantage. However vague, the concept of subsidiarity is one which we should welcome. It is undeniable that it vests back on the ambit of national Governments authority that otherwise would have been subject to creeping centralisation by the Commission, especially by those in Brussels. There is that legal status within the treaty of Rome. Subsidarity moves in the direction of redressing the deficit of democracy which so many hon. Members on both sides of the House have recognised. I therefore welcome the treaty and I shall vote for the Bill's Second Reading.

Keen as I am on the concept of Europe, like many of my colleagues I am not keen on the direction in which we have allowed the Commission to take Europe. The only issue on which I would disagree with those of my colleagues who take that view is whether we should oppose the treaty now or whether we see this as one of the best and last opportunities, with Britain's forthcoming presidency around the corner, to influence the shape of Europe in a positive way. It is because I trust my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary to do that and to make the concept of subsidiarity work that I shall support the Bill on Second Reading, notwithstanding my small concerns about some matters that I have read about in the treaty. I suspect that that position may be fundamentally different from that adopted by some of my hon. Friends who share my concerns but feel that the best way of meeting them is to stop the process now. I feel that we have already gone too far for us to go back.

What shall we be doing if we vote against the Bill's Second Reading? What can we do? We can do nothing positive at this stage except to encourage my right hon. Friends to make the best possible use of the treaty, of subsidiarity and of Britain's presidency to ensure that Europe works for us and that the institutions of Europe are subject to change, to improvement. We do not have to see Europe as being immutable. The structures of Europe are not immutable; they cannot be set in concrete. The very fact that we shall sign the treaty and ratify it proves that Europe and its institutions can be changed. They should be changed and the momentum leading to the establishment of a more democratic Europe can continue. Our wish to see change and improvement can be fulfilled if we lead from the front.

I know that my hon. Friends are anxious to add their words to the debate, so I shall simply say that hon. Members should by all means support the Bill, but they should also put on record some of our deep suspicions of some of its contents, about which our right hon. Friends should be very careful in their interpretation.

4.45 am

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): At this hour of the morning, a Baedeker-type tour of even the most beautiful constituency in the kingdom would, I suggest, have slight limitations of appeal. I shall say no more than that Monmouth has in its historic towns of Abergavenny, Chepstow, Monmouth and Usk a rich architectural heritage well up to any European standards. The valley of the River Wye is a jewel of European beauty that has long been appreciated. It is part of the great tradition of the 18th century formulation of the picturesque, which is the one British contribution to European aesthetics that is matched by nothing else in Europe.

Having said that, I must pay tribute to my immediate predecessor. It is fair to say that he and I had substantial differences, but he was always courteous and hard working. Like the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), I have no doubt that those in the Labour party responsible for such matters will ensure his return to this House for some other constituency.

Monmouth's former Member of Parliament, the late Sir John Stradling Thomas, was well known to hon. Members and was much loved. He is well remembered in the constituency.

My constituents have a long, active and robust tradition of involvement in Europe, beginning with the battle of Agincourt. In the 18th century the gentlemen of Monmouth erected an especially fine temple on the Kymin to celebrate the victories of British admirals.

It has always been at the forefront of British foreign policy to maintain the balance of power in Europe and to maintain our interests and our influence to the best extent possible with the means at our disposal.

I say to those hon. Friends who have criticised: what would our right hon. Friends have done? What else do they propose? Do they suggest that we should leave the European Community? I can tell them that I have heard very little support for that proposition in any section of the community. Indeed, the commercial interests in my constituency would be horrified at such a proposal. If it is not to be withdrawal from the European Community, what do the critics of the Maastricht agreement propose? Are they suggesting that my right hon. Friends could have extracted a better agreement? If so, they are not being realistic. The Government had a truly remarkable achievement at Maastricht, the true import of which has clearly been realised by the Labour party.

Certain doctrinal statements in the treaty, as amended and proposed, are of considerable significance for the whole Conservative approach to politics over the last decade. For example, new article 3a refers to the adoption of an economic policy that is

"conducted in accordance with the principle of an open market economy with free competition."

Those who seek to divide the policy of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister from that of his predecessor should reflect on the fact that it has been the main thrust of Conservative Administrations to emphasise the importance of a free open market in Europe.

The second paragraph of new article 3a, in describing the arrangement for monetary matters, refers to

"a single monetary policy and exchange rate policy the primary definition and conduct of both . . . shall be to maintain price stability, and without prejudice to this objective, to support the general economic policies in the Community, in accordance with the principle of an open market economy with free competition."

I cannot imagine anything more fundamentally in alignment with what my right hon. and hon. Friends have fought for over the past decade or so. When one looks at the statute proposed for the bank, it says that the primary objective will be to maintain price stability. An Opposition Member rightly said earlier that that primacy is stated boldly, plainly and without any material qualification of the sort that one might have expected if one were of a socialist disposition, requiring, for example, conditions on full employment or a trade-off between inflation and employment.

What we see in the treaty is a bold political revolution carried out by my right hon. Friends in Europe which has

carried Conservative principles to the forefront of the Community. It is rather like the achievement of privatisation, a political principle which has been applied in practice throughout the world and has transformed and undermined the approach of a whole generation or two to socialism and the order of the state.

The commercial interests of my constituency believe passionately that for their exports they want a single free market in which to trade. But if it is to be a free single open market, provided it works and provided the safeguards are appropriate, that must ultimately mean a single currency. It is all very well looking back upon the attractions of floating exchange rates, but when we have a treaty which sets out the principles of sound public finance and money, I find it deeply ironic to see some in the Conservative party who believe that a national right to sovereignty involves the right and freedom to debauch the currency at will. How that can possibly be justified I do not begin to comprehend.

The Opposition have clearly realised the inherently revolutionary nature of the proposed treaty. It is amazing to see the heirs of Lloyd George and Maynard Keynes talking as though they were Montague Norman or Winston Churchill going back on the gold standard. That is the irony of the position that we have reached. The Liberal Democrats have swallowed that to a degree that leaves us breathtaken inasmuch as they seem to swallow it regardless of whether it works or not. But what now seems to have achieved universal acceptance is the fact that sound money is the primary basis of successful economic policy. That is a good thing and it is not something to be regretted. It is the necessary precondition of all freedom and prosperity.

National Governments have no need, basis or right to intervene in monetary affairs. The best and most satisfactory arrangement of our finances was throughout the period from our constitutional revolution in 1688 until 1914 whereby, through a combination of freedom and constitutional liberty, the Bank of England, a properly managed public debt and the gold standard, we maintained stable prices for a century or more and were compelled only to come off those standards in periods of war and crisis.

It is a wholly admirable objective in the modern context to introduce into the EC a system to guarantee a basically sound currency by an independent institution not corrupted by democratic interference or the interference of politicians who are more interested in short-term advantage than in the preservation of sound money and public finance.

I find it deeply ironic that people talk about democratic control of central banks. We used to hear it argued that there had to be democratic control of the commanding heights of the economy. That was the justification of every socialist for nationalising them. There are aspects of our economy which have no business with politicians and are best left in free and independent hands. We should be clear that whereas that is consistent with the Conservative party's principles, traditions and practice, over the longer term the difficulties that it poses for the Opposition are immense.

One notes the refreshing enthusiasm—something we have not seen of late—of the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) in stating socialist objections to the treaty based on its monetary soundness and the way it puts public finance on a firm footing. What of the more conciliatory and adaptive members of the Opposition Front Bench? Labour has just fought a general election in which it campaigned for a number of things that the treaty would, it appears, rule out. How could a Labour party seeking government argue what it would do?

Under the Maastricht treaty, Labour's borrowing as a proportion of gross domestic product would be limited, as would its ability to increase interest rates, print money, or fiddle the exchange rate. A Labour Government would therefore have to limit its expenditure or raise taxes to pay for it. The connection between the amount that Labour wanted to spend and the amount it would have to raise in direct taxation—a power which would remain in place—would be immediate, and incapable of obfuscation or evasion. I regard that as a wholly admirable achievement by my right hon. Friends.

There has been talk of the severity of the loss of sovereignty. I accept that fear. I understand and appreciate the traditions of our constitution, but one must view the matter in the context of the age in which we live. My constituents appreciate that in the case of a paper mill in Sudbrook exporting to Germany. If the Germans altered the regulations in such a way as to interfere with that company's trade, it would be powerless—under a free trade arrangement—to do anything.

The advantage of the European Community is that it makes it possible—at least in theory—to ensure a level playing field. It offers the possibility of running lorries from one end of this country to the far end of the European Community. It provides an opportunity to get car prices in this country down to more acceptable free market levels. With VAT harmonisation, hotel keepers, for example in the Wye valley, may have an opportunity to correct the gross injustice whereby they have to charge value added tax of 17·5 per cent. when, as many British people who enjoy cheap foreign holidays know, the hotel VAT rate abroad is minimal.

Those would not be diminutions of the power of the British state, but opportunities within the new framework to extend our influence in such a way as to promote British commerce and trade. I see in the treaty that my right hon. Friends have achieved something that is traditional, coherent in itself, and wholly consistent with the finer traditions of British policy.

Neither I nor my constituents want the social chapter. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary rightly and successfully fought against that. We prefer to deal at intergovernmental level with the four fundamental issues of foreign policy, security, internal matters, and immigration. We believe that the strengthening of the Council of Ministers is highly desirable, and I do not begin to accept that there is a democratic deficiency in those arrangements.

The treaty remains a treaty between states, with a new political organisation created alongside those states. The democratic element is this House in this country, and the Parliaments in other countries.

As to the European Parliament, it is inconceivable that it is possible to create what we would understand as a representative parliamentary democracy, with constituencies of half a million or more individuals—particularly if one adopted proportional representation, multi-member constituencies, or some other arrangement of that convoluted variety. Such a course would gain the respect of only the Italian Parliament. What we have rightly done

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—what my right hon. Friends have done—is to limit the opportunities for the European Parliament to useful and effective checks in limited areas.

I do not believe that the federal fears that have been raised in the House are realistic. Removal of the word "federal" from the treaty was a major political achievement. It will become much easier to avoid such arrangements as more states seek admission to the European Community. If eastern European states are admitted, it will simply not be possible to have an arrangement involving representation of states of that size and that sort.

The fact remains that my right hon. Friends have seized the opportunity to reach an arrangement that is in the best interests of our country, western Europe and indeed eastern Europe. If we have a fair and free open market in which states that cheat and do not comply can be fined, my constituents will regard that as a major step forward.

The European Community is not a state or a super-state but a new kind of political organisation which, along with the Union, has certain supranational features. It is all very well to talk in terms of unions of sovereign states, but the great lesson of the high commands of the first world war—separated between France and ourselves —was that it was vastly superior to have an allied supreme command. NATO is the classic example of a supranational organisation with a supreme allied commander in Europe, co-ordinating and creating an effective organisation to fulfil the wishes of its member states.

I believe that the whole purpose of the European Community is not to create some absolute federal state, but to fulfil the interests of our particular nation and to make western Europe, and the rest of Europe, a more prosperous and safer place.

5.1 am

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): We have just heard an excellent maiden speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), to which we listened with great interest. I am sure that all who knew his predecessor, John Stradling Thomas, remember him well. He was famous for many things. He had an elephantine memory; he was one of the best raconteurs in the House; we all enjoyed his company very much indeed, and I personally miss him greatly. Judging by his maiden speech, however, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth will prove an excellent replacement, and we look forward to hearing from him many more times.

Many things influence us on our individual roads to the House of Commons. For me, one of the great spurs was that famous observation by Edmund Burke:

> "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing".

On the vexed question of the direction and development of modern Europe, too many of us in the House of Commons have done little or nothing for too long. I may excuse some hon. Members from that charge, but I do not excuse myself.

In regard to the treaty, we must ask ourselves the following questions. What exactly is at stake? How important is it? Do our constituents understand what we are doing? Having debated those questions, we must finally ask ourselves two more: is it right in itself and—more important—is it right that it should be done with the nation largely in ignorance?

If the answer to one or both of those last two questions is no, we must not do it. It is far too important a step to be taken in such a way. What is at stake is fundamental. We are talking about the power and purse strings of government. We are all aware of the history of the House, and the maiden speeches made by many hon. Members today have served to underline that. We shall be voting on our country's identity and on our right to govern ourselves as an island nation.

Every hon. Member must ask himself whether he wants more power slipping away from here to Brussels, or whether the time has come to arrest and reverse that trend. There can no longer be any fudging. The question is a basic one and in years to come we shall all have to answer, to ourselves as well as the country, for what we do now.

The difficulties of making the European Economic Community, as it was originally called, work were as obvious in the general from the outset as they have become in the particular over the years, as implementation has proceeded. The very idea that so many different nations, with different cultures, languages, histories, climates and work practices could ever be sensibly regulated by a single set of rules was nonsense. This was pointed out when the Community was formed, but it was denied. As implementation and enlargement have continued, so the harsh realities have become more and more obvious and the absurdities, not least the common agricultural policy, are plain for all to see.

When speaking in my constituency about the Community, I used to say that although the financial structures would probably never make sense, and there would always be imbalances between the various nations, this was the price we paid for peace. My constituents could accept that, but now this is being taken much further and I am being asked to believe, and to sell to my constituents, the idea that binding us ever closer together will one day result in all these inequalities being removed. I do not believe it, they do not believe it and the House should not believe it. I have come to believe that the tighter we try to bind ourselves together, the more the inequalities and irritations will chafe and, far from this being a recipe for peace, the chafing could well become an open wound and lead eventually to conflict. A looser framework, giving nations more elbow room and breathing space, will be much healthier in the long term.

For the civil servants and politicians involved in European legislation, there appears to be a kind of schizophrenia. Views depend entirely on which side of the channel the person is sitting at the time. Directives that seem sensible and communautaire when agreed in the neutral, rarefied and utopian atmosphere of a Brussels committee room or a Strasbourg restaurant turn out to be nonsensical when applied to the local factory, corner shop or women's institute. It would be amusing if it had not caused so much damage. However, it is doing increasing damage not only to the industries, organisations and people who live in our constituencies but to our ability to represent them here in the House of Commons.

I represent an agricultural constituency. In terms of the rules and regulations affecting agriculture, we were promised a level playing field. Instead of that, in some sections of the industry, we now have what seems like the north face of the Eiger, and the incline is never in our

favour. That could mean, for example, the decimation of the poultry processing industry in my constituency, a major and vital employer. In this debate, the details do not matter, but what happens when I take up the issue with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food? He tells me that he will do what he can, but he is only one of 12, and I may or may not get the satisfaction that I seek on behalf of my constituents. I do not blame the Minister—I blame the system.

We have a unique parliamentary system. Any Member of Parliament who is made aware of a constituency problem that needs prompt action can bring it to the attention of the appropriate Minister at once and, if his case is just and urgent, the Minister can act promptly. If that Minister has to consult 11 other Ministers and gain their agreement before he can act, what price our precious parliamentary system, and how long before other Departments go down the road taken by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food until, eventually, we are all prevented from serving our constituents in that unique way?

For an island nation, so many of our long-cherished protections are now under threat. We shall be hard pressed to prevent open access to our country for people and, very importantly, for animals and for plants. Each one of these matters presents enormous problems, and we must ask: if the European system is a good one, why are we being forced to take this obviously retrograde step, totally against our national interests?

Together with the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who is dozing on the Opposition Front Bench, I attended the very first of the latest batch of intergovernmental conferences that finally resulted in the new treaty.

I went to Rome, supposedly to discuss the long-term future of the Community in a non-political, non-nationalistic way. Immediately we arrived the rules were changed. Everyone sat in party groups. The next thing that happened was that it was made quite clear that all the proposals being put forward—the kind of proposals in this treaty—had already been agreed to by almost everyone there, and the final resolution was being drafted before the first speech was made. The whole thing, in a British parliamentary sense, was high farce. We finished up, on the last morning, voting on no fewer than 222 amendments, printed on purple paper. I have them here and I shall keep them always. It took hours to vote and the outcome was a communiqué which, as I have already said, was drafted before we even started. Hundreds voted for it and 13, of whom I was one, voted against. Few people understood what they were doing or, as far as I could make out, cared.

Mr. George Robertson: I knew what I was doing at that time, what I was voting for and what was there. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the treaty he will see that his Minister agreed to a protocol at the end of the treaty calling for regular meetings or conferences of the Parliaments of the European Community, so it is going to happen again. We shall just have to wait and see whether the Whips choose the hon. Gentleman for the privilege, for the second time, of going to the Italian Chamber of Deputies.

Mr. Lord: If the Whips should ask me to go, I would be most reluctant. I regarded it as a complete waste of time, as did most of the people who were there, some of whom sit on the Opposition Benches.

Most people in this country do not understand what the treaty means. I suspect that most Members of Parliament still do not fully understand it. An attempt was made to get the appropriate documents laid before the House for the debate in a way that would have made clear exactly what we were debating, but that was not done—for reasons that we can only guess at.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Which documents is my hon. Friend alleging the House needs but which are not available to the House?

Mr. Lord: It was suggested that we might have a simplified document, explaining to hon. Members exactly what we were doing, in a way that we could all understand. All that has been done is to make available all the relevant documents which, as my right hon. Friend will be aware, are very complicated and difficult to understand. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) tried hard to get documents that would be simpler for us to work with. They are not available. All that we have are what are called the relevant documents, which are extremely complicated.

During the election campaign I, like other hon. Members, knocked on thousands of doors and talked to thousands of people in my constituency. Whenever the question of Europe came up, the message I got was clear and simple. The people of this country want a common market, a free trade area, for which they voted in a referendum some years ago. They want that, and nothing more. I have already said that the implications of all the changes that are now taking place have not been fully understood by the nation at large. When they are, I believe that there will be great anger and resentment. People will justifiably feel either that they should have been told in simple language what was going on or that at least their legislators should have understood what was going on and anticipated the country's reaction. We pride ourselves increasingly on open government, but if people really do not understand what we are doing in this House of Commons they are shut out just as effectively as if the door had been closed in their face.

When the Prime Minister returned from Maastricht I was pleased with the job that he and his colleagues had done: protecting this country from the worst aspects of the treaty and, more importantly, buying time. I voted then in support of the Prime Minister's achievements, but since then it has become quite clear that there is now a new mood in Europe, partly brought about by the increasing changes in eastern Europe, partly by the British stand over many years and partly because, at long last, the Governments and people of the countries of the Twelve are starting to realise what is happening and what is at stake. I was interested to note at the time of the Maastricht meeting that, apparently, 75 per cent. of French people have never even heard of Maastricht. A golden opportunity presents itself.

Whenever sensible criticisms are made of the Maastricht treaty, the retort always comes back, "What is the alternative? Do you want to come out?" Nobody ever says what coming out really means or what the precise implications would be. In any case, I do not know, and I

[Mr. Lord]

do not know that anybody else wants to come out of anything. Between coming out and European union there now lies a new prospect.

Railway trains are frequently referred to when describing Britain's attitude to Europe. We have been told that we should get out of the guard's van and into the driver's cab. Until now the driver was German and the fireman was French. We were allowed the occasional, albeit violent, tug on the controls. But now our country and our Prime Minister have a new stature and a new authority in European affairs and the rest of Europe is having second thoughts. Our presidency starts soon. We have the opportunity not just to sit in the driver's cab but to switch the points. The train need not come out in reverse, but neither should it career on down its present, increasingly criticised track until it finally hits the buffers.

Because of the tremendous job that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister originally did in Maastricht and because I trust, respect and admire him, I am sorely tempted to support him on the issue and to trust him to do what I want done. Unfortunately, I am forced to recognise that, no matter how high someone stands in our estimation, if he is asking us to sign something which is patently damaging to something which we hold dear and for which we are responsible, signing becomes impossible. I trust my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. But my constituents trust me.

As I believe in the authority and responsibility of the House of Commons, there surely can be no more important issue on which to demonstrate my belief than this issue, which directly diminishes that authority and responsibility. Like many other hon. Members, over the past 20 years I have tried to believe that the sillier and more dangerous aspects of Europe make sense. But, again to quote Edmund Burke,

"There is . . . a limit at which forbearance ceases to be a virtue."

If, at the conclusion of the debate, I am convinced that the signing of the treaty will not mean a further dilution of the power of the House of Commons, and if I am convinced that the signing would be of real benefit to the country and to Europe, I might support the Government. I have never voted against the Government in the nine years that I have been in the House, but I do not want to become a citizen of Europe. In the interests of my country, my constituents and my conscience, with a very heavy heart I might have to do just that.

5.17 am

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): It can truly be said that those of us who are left have staying power. If any of us had an imperfect knowledge of the subject, after 14 hours of listening to the debate—most of us have listened to nearly all the speeches—we must nearly be experts. I have heard some fine speeches and I am intimidated by the fact that the best ones have generally been maiden speeches. They have been of an enormously high standard. My maiden speech was quite unnoticed. Nobody said what a fine speech the hon. Member for Beverley made. I can only suppose that it was as mediocre as I thought it was at the time.

I am in an invidious position and I take no pleasure whatsoever in speaking in the debate. As I have made clear, I intend to vote against the Bill's Second Reading. That gives me no pleasure, because I know perfectly well what the Government have tried to do. I listened to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister earlier and I was convinced that he tried his damnedest at Maastricht to limit the damage. By that I mean that he was surrounded at the table by a considerable number of people who wanted the kind of Europe that he clearly did not want and, incidentally, which I do not want either. I am delighted that we have had nothing to do with the social contract and that this House will decide whether we enter the third stage of EMU. I am also delighted that security and foreign policy will still be decided under the aegis of the intergovernmental conferences.

I readily accept that the situation could have been a great deal worse. However, I am afraid that that is not good enough. When I consider treaty amendments, I think about the kind of Europe that I want to see. We are all entitled to have a vision of Europe. The mere fact that I may disagree with the Government's view of Europe or with my colleagues does not make me a bad European. It simply means that I have a different vision of what Europe should be.

I do not regard myself as a Eurosceptic. I am very much in favour of Europe. I do not say that we should pull up the anchor and take the United Kingdom somewhere else. We are part of Europe and we must stay part of Europe. I am concerned only about the kind of Europe that we will have.

I wish to see an evolutionary Europe. Institutions are much better if they are allowed to develop slowly. I take exception to the fact that the people who are deciding matters at intergovernmental conferences want to force the issue of unification far faster than I would wish. I make that point against the background of the internal market. I want the internal market to be fulfilled. However, if we examine the issue, we find that the internal market is no nearer its fulfilment now than it was a few years ago. I predict that it will not be fulfilled for five, 10 or, as some say, 15 years. If the internal market has not been achieved, I fail to understand why our Government or any other Government should want me to consider another initiative within the aegis of the Community. I am aware of the need for much closer co-operation between Community states, but that should occur between nation states.

Mrs. Currie: If I understand my hon. Friend, he said that we are no closer to the completion of the internal market than we were a few years ago. What have we been doing for the past two or three years? We have considered directive after directive. Some 282 directives have been agreed as part of the single market and a few more have been added. More than 80 per cent. of those directives have been implemented into legislation in this country and many of them have been commented on in the debate. What have we been doing if we have not been implementing the single market?

Mr. Cran: My hon. Friend understands what I am saying perfectly. The House is aware that the United Kingdom was the moving force for the internal market.

She said, and I agree, that the United Kingdom has incorporated more directives into our law more quickly than any other country of the European Community. That is not the point. For those of us who have gone around

Europe, the point is that some of our partners clearly will not implement the directives of the internal market, for perfectly good reasons.

I give my hon. Friend one example—takeovers and mergers within the European Community. The United Kingdom is an open market. We know that to be so. It is not so in certain other countries of the European Community. If my hon. Friend and I travelled around Europe as I have, she would find that people made it clear that they had no intention of so doing. I repeat to my hon. Friend that I wish to see the fulfilment of the internal market in all the countries of the European Community.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend's invitation to me to go traipsing around Europe sounds exciting and I hope that I may take him up on it at some stage. But he is basically wrong. Everyone can pick up one example. One example does not disprove the broad principle that most of the internal market is now in place, particularly for trade. Most of our constituent companies have the opportunity to trade freely across Europe. He must also accept that the Bill that is offered to us contains the opportunity to take to court those countries and companies that deny opportunities. There is no longer the opportunity to deny the development of the single market.

Mr. Cran: My hon. Friend simply is not living in the real business world. I should like to take her to speak to at least half a dozen of the major insurance companies in Britain. If she does not know them I will certainly introduce her to them. They will explain that while insurance companies of other countries of the European Community can freely do business in the United Kingdom, it is a different kettle of fish when United Kingdom companies try to do business in other countries of the European Community. I make my hon. Friend the offer that if she does not have the entrée to those companies I will happily arrange it for her.

I move on quickly because I know that we all want to come to a conclusion. If we accept the Bill we shall face pressure from our partners in the EC to agree to stage 3 of economic and monetary union. That pressure will be brought to bear very quickly. Other pressures will come on us within the United Kingdom to conform. I have heard umpteen speeches this evening and yesterday about the need to conform. Of course, that also means that we must not be left behind. Essentially, it means that we are on a conveyor belt to perhaps federalism or perhaps something else—I do not know. The fact of the matter is that no one knows. But we are on that conveyor belt and it is accelerating.

My former right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford, Mr. Tebbit, put it well in the debate in the House when he said:

> "While I realise that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister feels that he has hedged around the bridgeheads established by the Community and the union with good defensive positions, all experience within the Community suggests that it will expand from any bridgehead which it has been given."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1991; Vol. 201, c. 325.]

That is precisely what I think will happen, even with the agreement before us today.

I wanted to say a great deal more, but clearly time is not on my side. I finish with two points. Economic and monetary union is a key part of the Maastricht proposals, or will be at some time in the future. We can argue either way. I see the intellectual arguments on each side, although I err on the side of not being in favour of economic and monetary union. But we all agree that convergence is required before consideration of any further steps of economic and monetary union. That seems clear. The presupposition is simply that it would need fairly massive movements of money and capital or people. That will not happen in my lifetime and if that is the case I fail to understand why the United Kingdom Government were bullied into considering it and making provision for its future. I particularly fail to understand that against the background that the United Kingdom's view of these matters is usually highly pragmatic—the view that there is no need to consider things before there is a need to do so.

If I thought for one second that the principle of subsidiarity would work, many of my fears would dissipate, but I fear that the principle of subsidiarity is nor more than a fig leaf. It worries me that when I go to Europe and speak to people whom I know to be federalists, they can use the principle of subsidiarity to expand the activities of the European Community in the same way as those who do not wish them to be expanded can use it. That seems to show that there is a considerable flaw in the principle, although I realise that if it were more specifically set out—with functions for the nation state and functions for the EC agreed beforehand—it would have influence and power and I would back it. The fact is that it has not.

Having waited a long time to speak, I simply say that I oppose the Bill and I associate myself with my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), who said that if the House agrees to impose the treaty on the Great British people, at the very least we ought to ask them before we do so. Despite all the imperfections of referendums, the only way for us to do that is to agree to a referendum and to ask the British people.

5.31 am

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): The only thing that thrills me more, Madam Deputy Speaker, than the fact that I am now standing is the fact that you are sitting where you are, and I congratulate you, with warm affection, on doing so.

When I was first returned to Parliament with a majority of 53 votes, I received a telegram from a great friend—a don at Oxford—which merely said:

> "Sitting is better than standing."

You are more comfortable than I am, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I divine that my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), who made his maiden speech, is an English barrister. One can tell them by the manner of their speech. A great English barrister, F. E. Smith, who was also a great Member of this House and a great Lord Chancellor—although he did not have the benefit of being a Scot—after a long dinner, which I do not suppose lasted until 5.33 am, was the last to speak, as I believe I am—[SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: "No, there are two more."] Very well. That makes it even worse for those who have yet to speak, because F. E. Smith said

> "Before I came here tonight I prepared two speeches—a long one and short one—and in view of the lateness of the hour I propose to give them both."

That is my intention. I want to take a rather different view from some who have spoken of the matters that we have discussed for so many hours.

[Sir Nicholas Fairbairn]

In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran), I pay tribute to those who have joined us in the House. I also pay tribute to the fact that this debate has generated some of the traditional great speeches to which we have become, regretfully, unaccustomed. I will not be partial, because I believe that the speech of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was masterly in its parliamentary performance. I should also like to pay tribute in particular to my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith). I believe that he is a worthy successor to one of the most courageous Members of the House, courageous in every sense. It was an honour and a privilege to share the company of his membership.

May I make a principal point about the treaty? I remember when we debated that extraordinary document produced by the Church of England, "Faith in the City". The extraordinary thing was that I think that I was the only person in that debate who had actually read it. I am sure that you will remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, that Scotland was mentioned once on page 12, paragraph 2, with condescension—what it said was wrong.

I have read the treaty and it is important that those of us who are discussing it should have done so. I will merely refer to two matters mentioned at the beginning of the treaty. Article A states:

"By this Treaty, the High Contracting Parties establish among themselves a European Union, hereinafter called 'the Union'".

Article F states:

"The Union shall respect the national identities of its Member States, whose systems of government are founded on the principles of democracy."

I am only a simple lawyer, but if those articles are not, in themselves, an entitlement to make of it whatever one will, I do not know what is.

Let us consider articles at random—for example, article 190, which states:

"Regulations, directives and decisions adopted jointly by the European Parliament and the Council, and such acts adopted by the Council or the Commission, shall state the reasons on which they are based and shall refer to any proposals or opinions which were required to be obtained pursuant to this Treaty."

That is the shortest phrase in the treaty, and I could go through all the others, but what does it mean? It means nothing, everything, anything or whatever one wishes it to mean. Was it not Humpty Dumpty, when asked what it meant, who said:

"it means just what I choose it to mean"?

That phrase is equivalent to the great opportunity for our Government.

Let us not forget that the concept of a European union was first suggested by King Henry of Navarre in 1600, when his great Minister, Sully, proposed a union of 15 states. The only history that we were ever taught in Scotland, as happens in England, was the history of Europe, which is a history of attempted confederations and associations—whether Attila the Hun, Caesar or the Austro-Hungarian empire—and super-states attempted by tyranny or agreement. Each eventually collapsed because of the competition of those who believed that they had an ethnic right to be different. The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire started the first world war and an artificially congregated federalism caused the collapse of Yugoslavia.

Let us not forget that Winston Churchill first proposed a confederation of Europe in 1932, before Hitler came to power. In Blackpool in 1946, in the Guildhall in 1947 and in the Hague in 1948, before his great speech about the iron curtain, he proposed that Europe should unite and spoke of a federal Europe.

All that was in answer to certain forces. The force that brought together the treaty of Rome—far less Churchill's concept—was the fact that we wanted a third force between the Soviet empire, with all its rightfulness, power, villany and, eventually, nuclear strength, and the American union—the United States—whose power was held together by the threat of the Soviet Union.

I do not understand what my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) was talking about when he spoke of three blocs. He seemed to wander into naming the ASEAN basin as one of the blocs. The blocs that brought Europe together were Europe and America.

The terrible tyranny of the Soviet Union has now disintegrated and Margaret Thatcher was the principal person instrumental in that achievement. As I said throughout the election campaign, I did not believe that what has happened in the United States of America would happen so soon. America is ethnically unstable. Without the challenge and fear of the Soviet Union as a Stalinist bloc, America is not a stable federalism.

We were told on the news the other day that Korean shopkeepers were shooting Mexican looters, but I thought that they were all Americans there. I do not believe that that great federal state can have any more stability than other states ruled by tyranny, democracy or fear if it has no ethnic sensibility.

Europe has a wonderful culture, civilisation and history, with a rich tapestry of philosophy and religion, but the history of Europe is of conflict, disintegration, difference and constant change. I do not believe that merely trying to glue it together as an imaginary unit will achieve the inevitable integration of a false confederation.

The Government have a great opportunity. We can see the instability of Germany, and its propective power. I was in Berlin on the night the wall came down. We can see the instability of France, which has been comparatively ungovernable during our lifetime. We can see the instability of Italy, and understand that there is no likeihood of comprehension between the south of Portugal and the north of Norway or the north of Scotland. In the United Kingdom, Kirkwall is further from Edinburgh than Edinburgh is from London.

There was a great moment when Europe was united by the Romans—"civis Romanus sum"—but that did not compromise, alter or unite the three parts of Gaul, or Germany, Scotland, Hibernia or Grampus. It left that great variety and combined it with a major international comcept.

I have something frightening to say: I am a citizen of France under an Act passed by Mary Queen of Scots' mother. The citizens of Scotland and the citizens of France enjoy common citizenship. That was the inspiration for Churchill's offer to the French in 1940. Those of us who can trace our families back to that date are citizens of France. Let us have the great European concept—the great "civis Romanus sum, civis Europeanus sum". Let us have every form of co-operation. Let us have every form of trade. But let us not have a system that destroys the sovereignty, the individuality and the disparity of the nation states to which people know they belong.

The greatest speech of all on this subject was delivered by the Earl of Belhavon in 1707 as we said goodnight to the kingdom of Scotland and entered the Union——

Mr. George Robertson: Surely he did not deliver it at 5.50 am?

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Oddly enough, he did.

In those days Scots lived north of the border and the English lived south of it, but they had a common culture and a common language. That painful union eventually led to total integration; 80 per cent. of Scots now live south of the border and are represented by Members from south of the border.

This union has some stress, but none of the strains of Europe. We should certainly be at the heart of the immense dynamic possibilities of Europe—indeed, Scotland always has been. There are Scottish quarters in Warsaw and in Amsterdam. There are more McKays in the Netherlands telephone book than there are Van Schevens. We are a cosmopolitan European nation with a great culture.

The important question is: how far are we going to go? Will we include Russia, Scandinavia and even Turkey, 90 per cent. of which is in Asia? It seems a little odd to include it in a European Community. And if we create an inclusive beneficiaries club, what happens to those who are excluded?

We did not need the European Community to create the International Air Transport Association or other bodies of international significance. International disciplines do not need to be imposed by huge, centralised organisations. The two burning issues that mankind faces —they are not covered by the treaty—remain economic migration and the population explosion. There is no point in Members discussing the minutiae of a treaty, which they in any case do not understand, if they do not comprehend these threats to the planet. In 30 years' time—I trust that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will still be in the Chair then —the population of the world will have doubled. If hon. Members want me to speak until the population of the world has doubled, at least one thing is certain—those who are listening to me will not be responsible for its doubling.

Seriously, these are global matters with which the comity of Europe—its culture, its civilisation and its association—can deal. We are now the masters. We are the one cohesive, confident, experienced nation in Europe and we are in charge. That is a great opportunity for the shaping of Europe. The treaty can mean what we make it mean and when I say, "We", I mean my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and our Government.

5.55 am

Mrs. Edwina Currie: (Derbyshire, South): May I first congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your elevation to your important post. It is nice to see you there, and I thank you very much for calling me in daylight.

I have heard many speeches tonight—I gather that I am the 55th speaker—many of which have turned on the question of the sovereignty of this House. We will later debate the House's procedures, and I hope that we shall bear it in mind that although we have gone through the night, some colleagues still wish to speak. It does not seem a very sensible procedure that we have to debate in this way, and it is a great pity.

Some of the speeches have been excellent maiden speeches—I refer especially to the most recent, that of my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans). It was the most brilliant maiden speech that I have ever heard. It was absolutely first class, and it augurs well for the future. A key aspect of his speech was that, unlike the bulk of the 50 or so that we have heard, he was not carping but making positive remarks about the European Community and about the Bill.

The Bill and the Maastricht treaty come to us against a background and, indeed, as a consequence of the near completion of the single market. That and our membership of the monetary union have made explicit what we have all come to realise over a long period of time —as a trading nation, we are interdependent on other countries and its partners, and the options that we might once have had of going it alone no longer exist.

I am delighted about that, because we are now part of the biggest free market that the world has ever seen. It currently has about 340 million people, which is more than the United States of America, more than the old Soviet Union. As Her Majesty the Queen said in Strasbourg, what we are doing is unique in history—not only in our history—because this is the first time that such a grouping has been put together without force. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) referred to civis Romanus but forgot pax Romanus, which meant force. That was how Roman Europe was put together.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: May I proceed, as I listened to my hon. and learned Friend for about 20 minutes?

The treaty was put together without force. It is rising from the ashes of two terrible wars in Europe, and is doing so because of the voluntary co-operation of great nations. Within 10 years, we could have 25 countries and more than 400 million people in the Community. Many of the questions that we debate today and tomorrow arise absolutely and inevitably out of that.

How are we to have 25 currencies trading? The answer is that we cannot. Already in my constituency, the businesses that are trading across Europe and the world are choosing to trade in one or two key world currencies, especially the dollar and the deutschmark over which we have no control. It seems that much of what is being proposed would at least give our nation some say over those currencies.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I know what pax Romanus is but, if my hon. Friend remembers, civis Romanus sum was St. Paul's plea when he was arrested.

Mrs. Currie: Yes—and a fat lot of good it did him, if I remember rightly.

While the creation of a great market has been taking place, the United Kingdom has been sleep walking. It is almost as if we joined the European Community by accident. I deprecate our grudging and negative attitude, which has persisted right the way through into this debate. My right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, rightly said when speaking in Bonn recently that at best we have had a timorous and at worst a curmudgeonly approach to Europe, and it has served us ill to take it. Instead, we should be delighted at

[Mrs. Currie]

the expansion of the free market and the growth of peace and security in Europe. One of the results of our attitude is that we are ignorant about attitudes in our partner nations. We still talk with them, about them and to them as if they were stupid and think that the best way to communicate with them is to speak English more loudly than we would normally. I despair of that approach. It would seem that we miss so many tricks as a result.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) rightly said that our young people do not think in that way. He put the matter well. Our nation is changing under our noses. This year nearly 50,000 of our young people will take an A-level in a modern European language, and the number is rising year by year. Last year 17 million British people went abroad, most of them to Europe. It is necessary to queue at the ports now. Bookings are being taken well into next year at the channel ports. The level of trade is rising dramatically. The old barriers are breaking down. Our country is changing and we are becoming more diverse. We are becoming more enthusiastic and knowledgeable about Europe even as we speak.

I listened to some of the speeches of Labour Members. I notice that they all gave up a long time ago and left the Chamber. The stance that they are taking provides them with nothing that they can be proud about. During the election, they portrayed themselves as being more pro-European than us in the Conservative party. That has turned out to be a total sham. If the Labour party had won the election, a Labour Government would be taking the Bill through the House in the form in which it is now before us.

Mr. George Robertson: No.

Mrs. Currie: With all due respect, there would not have been time to renegotiate. As the Irish have recently found on the abortion issue, there would not have been the opportunity—it would have been denied by our European partners. Labour Ministers would have been standing at the Government Front Bench and hasseling us to let them take the Bill through the House. They would have slapped on a three-line Whip, and probably a guillotine as well. They would have insisted that everybody trooped through the Lobby in support of the Government.

What is the Labour party doing now? Labour Members have discovered their consciences, or perhaps they have discovered what they really think. They are going to abstain. How brave. How courageous. How pro-European of them. What a load of humbug. What an accurate view we now have of the Labour party in this country. The very fact that Europe was not an issue at the general election suggests to me that the people were more than satisfied with what our Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary negotiated on our behalf. They regard the treaty as a very good deal for the nation.

Perhaps Labour's abstention is entirely appropriate. I do not believe that socialism has anything to offer either in this debate or in debates about the future of Europe. The President of the European Commission has made it clear in recent speeches that he wants greater central control and direction. Well, he would, wouldn't he? Mr. Delors is a French socialist. His ultimate objective is to become president of his own country. He is almost inevitably an empire builder. I suspect that he shares the same view as Voltaire:

"In general the art of government consists in taking as much money as possible from one class of citizens to give to the other."

That is an old French pre-socialist.

The proposals to limit or impose restrictions on economic behaviour that are so dear to the hearts of trade unionists and socialists run counter to the general thrust of the free market and they might be challenged. It is right that the Government have challenged them.

I shall explain why I think that the social chapter is not a good idea. I am painted with all sorts of colours, but I am a Euro-enthusiast. What is going on in Europe is fantastic, but I think that the Government's stance on some of the issues is right. It is not a matter for Britain standing out against the rest. That rather priggish approach produces much resentment among our Community partners. It is what is best for the Community as a whole that is important, especially for the poorer nations and regions and for the nations that will join it, some of which are likely to be poor for a long time. It is far better for poorer nations and regions to exploit their low costs and attract labour-intensive activity. If they do that, they lessen their need for regional aid, and so the burden on the wealthier countries is reduced.

As Germany has found, the wealthy citizens of Europe do not have a bottomless purse and an ever-open heart. The imposition of German labour laws on the rest of the European Community will cost Germany a great deal of money. They have not yet begun paying out; neither have we, and nor have the other wealthy nations of Europe. More profound than that is the fact that a system that depends on a nation's own efforts is, as we have shown, much more likely in the long run to be successful. A system that does not depend on huge volumes of public money being shuttled from one country to another is much less likely to be corrupt.

That is not necessarily the way other countries view these matters. The small nations, such as the Netherlands, are arguing for competition on a different basis and it is essential that we understand that. They want competition not between countries but between businesses. They say that the multinational nature of many companies and their trade precludes control by one or two countries. Given the fuss that we have had with BCCI, the Maxwell corporation and a few other multinational businesses that have hidden their assets all over the world, those nations have a point. The poor countries feel, as is inevitable, that when we say that we do not believe in regional policy we want to condemn them to their poverty. I suspect that on those sorts of issues we are outnumbered and I expect that we shall be outvoted. It is in everyone's interest that the free market should be as unencumbered as possible and I urge my right hon. Friends to carry forward that style and that approch.

In 1857, Palmerston said:

"We have no eternal allies and no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual and these interests it is our duty to follow."

That is right: nothing is for ever, but I am certain that for my lifetime—certainly my political lifetime—our interests lie with Europe.

It is in our interests that the Community should grow and prosper, and it is doing so. In so doing, it is becoming an economic super-power. The European Community and

the EFTA countries alone—just those 19 countries—account for almost 30 per cent. of the world's gross domestic product and almost 45 per cent. of the world's trade. We are an economic super-power, whether we like it or not. It is, therefore, in our interests that the institutions of the Community should be strengthened—in my view, especially its Parliament. Somebody has to monitor, to regulate, to assent to and to dissent from what is happening in Europe. Somebody has to ferret around in those Community budgets. Somebody has to put questions to the Commissioners and sack them if necessary. Somebody has to protect the consumer Europe-wide. Somebody has to investigate maladministration by the Commission. None of those tasks exists now, and none can be done by national Parliaments, whether this House or any other Parliament. It can be done only by what Her Majesty called the ever-more important Parliament and that is in Europe.

It has been said by some tonight, and I agree, that Britain is now the strongest country in Europe. We have the best Government, we have the most stable economic and political environment, and we can exercise leadership in the Community as I suspect we never could in the days since we refused to join, back in my childhood. We can show other nations, in the short and the long term, how parliamentary democracy does work, how minorities can be protected, how different nations within one country can be given rights and how their cultures can enliven the diversity of our world.

We have shown how popular capitalism works for the benefit of all the people. That is what we should be contibuting to Europe. We should be proud that we can do it and we should now get on with it.

6.8 am

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I add my congratulations to the many that you have already received, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your elevation. I know that any Member of this House, from either side, who has ever served in Committee under your chairmanship will feel, as I do, that it is a very well-deserved and felicitous appointment.

I also congratulate the several maiden speakers whom I have heard tonight. I am only sorry that I was temporarily absent from the Chamber when my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) delivered his maiden speech, which received such a generous tribute from my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie).

It is a particular pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South in bringing to an end from the Back Benches the first part of our important debate on the Maastricht treaty. I shall be making different points, but they will chime well with the note that my hon. Friend has already sounded.

I shall be voting in the Lobby tomorrow night for the treaty without hesitation and with great enthusiasm. But that does not mean that I think that the text of treaty is ideal or that it has the finality of holy writ. In fact, a number of aspects of the treaty will, over anything more than the short term, prove to be seriously inadequate.

For example, I have severe doubts that it will in practice be possible, on the basis of the structure of pillars or columns on which the treaty is based, to carry out common defence and foreign policies which will be sufficiently coherent, focused, sustained, well supported and, therefore, sufficiently credible to be effective. Those common defence and foreign policies need to be effective if they are to be able to promote and defend the interests of Europe in what will certainly be an uncertain world.

Perhaps even more seriously, I have severe doubts about the extent to which, over anything longer than the short term, the relative absence of any structure of democratic legitimacy or accountability for the institutions of the Community will be acceptable to European public opinion.

Something that unites all of us in western Europe is a deep attachment to the principles of democracy. In that area, the treaty represents a number of improvements on previous treaties and the Single European Act. Nevertheless, we have a long way to go.

For example, the Commission, whose functions are laid down and described in the treaty, is based not so much on the concept of democracy as on a much earlier concept of government which might be characterised as benevolent paternalism or benevolent technocracy. The Commission has no electoral legitimacy and only inadequate structures of accountability.

I believe that over time it will prove unacceptable that the Council of Ministers, which has the greatest law-making power in the treaty, should continue to conduct those legislative functions in secret. Government behind closed doors was the practice in the nations of Europe in the 18th century and before. I cannot believe that we shall go far into the 21st century with that principle still enshrined in the constitution of our Community.

I pay tribute to the brave efforts made in the past few weeks by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to reduce wherever possible the secrecy with which government is practised here in Whitehall. The natural tendency of any Executive or individual, even if he or she passes from a legislature such as this behind the green baize doors into ministerial office, will, as far as possible, be to conduct their business in secret without the pressures of parliamentary or public opinion infringing on the ability to take the decisions that they see fit to take. But that principle is not acceptable to democracy and an increasing amount of democratic light will have to be let into the proceedings of the Council of Ministers.

None of this diminishes my genuine enthusiasm for the Maastricht treaty, for two reasons. The treaty does not pretend to be anything more than one further, if historic, stage in the process of European integration which began with the 1957 treaty of Rome—and I wholly agree with the statement repeatedly made in recent days by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs that it would be wrong to pursue the constitutional arguments at this time. After all, the treaty makes provision for a review in 1996, which gives time enough to reconsider the important issues that I mentioned.

I shall therefore confine my remaining remarks to two decisions that must be confronted and taken in the months ahead—the social chapter and the working time directive, and the vexed issue of the free movement of persons and internal frontiers—*[Interruption.]* I could not hear the sedentary intervention of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), but I shall be happy to give way to him.

Mr. George Robertson: I said that the working time directive is particularly relevant at this time in the morning.

Mr. Davies: I do not share the reluctance of Labour Members to work long hours when it seems worth while. I am delighted, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you called me. It is a great honour to speak in this debate and I make no complaint at all about being called a little after six o'clock in the morning. That is particularly so given that the alternative for me and other Back Benchers who have no particular call on your favours, Madam Deputy Speaker—because we are not Privy Councillors, former Ministers or otherwise of importance in the House—is that we would not have been called at all.

The working time directive is important in the serious sense in which I mentioned it. I couple it with the social chapter, although I am well aware that the directives was proposed by the Commission on the basis of previously existing treaties. Nevertheless, it forms a seamless part, with the social chapter, of a particular way of thinking that would, if it were adopted, prove disastrous for this country and the whole Community.

That thinking is based on the proposition that it is somehow possible to regulate a population into prosperity. As we know, that concept is very dear to Labour, which produced its own version during the general election campaign, in the form of a statutory minimum wage. Of course it is not possible to regulate a population into prosperity. Would that it were so easy. Nor is it possible to increase employment by increasing the cost of labour and making it less attractive to employ people.

When regulatory action such as that envisaged in the social chapter has the effect of increasing labour costs, the demand for labour will fall. The result will be not lower unemployment—which I have no doubt is the sincere aim of those who promote the social chapter in this country and elsewhere in the Community—but higher unemployment.

One cannot improve industry's competitiveness by increasing its cost base. One cannot increase private or public consumption by producing less. If one adopts a working time directive that reduces the number of hours that are worked in the economy, it follows that all the men and women in that economy will end up producing less in any given year than they would otherwise. The potential for consumption and prosperity would be not enhanced but reduced.

The thinking that has brought about the social chapter is a form of collective madness. It reaches a form of acute schizophrenia when it is associated in people's minds with a genuine concern about the future competitiveness of the Community's industries.

A number of distinguished public figures, particularly in France—Mrs Cresson and Mr Calvert are, I suppose, the best exponents of this view—entirely accept the thinking behind the social chapter. They want to load more and more social costs on to European employers; they want to take legislative and regulatory action that will reduce the number of hours worked and directly reduce productivity; at the same time, they go around saying that they are terribly worried about our ability to withstand the challenge of Japan, South Korea, the far east or the rest of the world.

If we continue to burden our industries with excessive costs and regulations, it will not be the fault of the Japanese if our trade deficit increases; it will be our fault. That is why these working time directives and social chapters—which seem so attractive at first sight, because people believe that they are being offered something for nothing—are in fact a disastrous folly. I am extremely proud of the fact that the only country that has stood up against this nonsense is ours and that our Government are the only one to have taken a stand. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister; I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment on all that she is doing to withstand the working time directive.

Let me couple those remarks with an observation addressed to some of my hon. Friends, who, I suspect, thoroughly agree with my analysis of the perils of social chapters, working time directives and the rest, but who appear to be rather more sceptical about the treaty. One reason why we should push forward with ratification of the treaty as soon as possible—there are many such reasons—is that I very much hope that, once we have ratified it and it has come into force on 1 January next year, it will be possible to pray in aid of the treaty—and, specifically, article 3(B) on subsidiarity—in the European Court of Justice, if we are taken to that court in connection with refusing the 48-hour week proposal and the other obnoxious provisions of the working time directive. I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend the Minister could tell me—either in his reply or at some later date—whether his legal advisers in the Foreign Office see any scope for praying in aid the subsidiary article 3(B) in the present treaty, once it has come into force, in the context of the working time directive and any litigation in which we may be involved in respect of that directive, although it was proposed under the treaties as they previously existed.

Decisions must also be made over the next few months about the free movement of persons and internal frontiers. Many people on both sides of the channel have always believed that, from 1 January next year, we would be able to pass through any internal Community frontiers without let, hindrance or bureaucracy, but we now find that that may not be the case.

That is a classic example of the need, which arises so often in politics, to reconcile two desirable objectives. Both the objectives that are at stake in this instance are extremely desirable. That we should be able to prevent uncontrolled immigration and maintain our immigration controls is, of course, vital for social peace and harmony in this country and it is vital for many other reasons. The other objective is our ability to travel freely in the Community. That, too, is a very desirable objective, as I am sure Ministers agree.

I was horrified to hear the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) say that he believed that internal frontiers were an essential part of national sovereignty. The right hon. Gentleman obviously does not know much history. He could hardly claim that, before 1914, the states of Europe had insufficient sovereignty. After all, we fought an internecine war—about as good a test of sovereignty as one could get. However, it was possible to travel through western Europe without let or hindrance and certainly without showing a

passport. People could go to Paris, Berlin or Rome without a passport and only at the frontier of the Russian empire would they have been asked for one.

I have no doubt that my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, who are men of broad historical vision and men of most liberal disposition in the most true and original sense of that word, would be the last to suggest that we should preclude the possibility of ever returning to the pre-1914 position. I cannot believe that anybody would wish to preclude that, so we must find a way to reconcile these two desirable and important principles—the prevention of uncontrolled immigration and the free movement of persons.

I hope that the Government have already given the matter a great deal of thought and I am sure that they will continue to do so. As a way of at least provoking a response, I shall offer my own suggestion and I shall be pleased to hear the response of my right hon. Friend the Minister. One way to reconcile the two objectives would be to establish a unified European immigration service with responsibility for control at the external frontiers, whether they are at airports or ports or on land.

What concerns my constituents about the prospective abolition of internal frontiers is that they have no trust in, say, a Greek immigration officer on the Thracian frontier deciding who might ultimately install himself or herself in Lincolnshire. If, however, the service that was responsible for the control of the common external frontier was a mixed man force, committed to the standards of compliance and the high levels of enforcement with which we are familiar, there would be confidence in the integrity of the external frontier. It would then be possible for us to achieve this desirable objective of internal free movement. It would also avoid the embarrassment of litigation before the European Court of Justice, which I fear would otherwise inevitably arise, and the embarrassing, in diplomatic and other ways, anomaly of the Irish land frontier if we decided to determine a special status for ourselves on the ground that our other frontiers are sea frontiers.

I put forward that modest proposal as part of what I hope will be a massive effort, using every imaginative source of inspiration, to reconcile these two important objectives. I should be grateful to know whether the Government can hold out some hope that there is not simply an irreconcilable conflict between these two principles which will mean that, for ever, we shall have to abandon the hope of free movement, or else face uncontrolled immigration.

6.29 am

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): It is said, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is always very handy to have a sense of humour in the House of Commons. After sitting here for 15 hours, anybody's sense of humour—even Benny Hill's—would be stretched to its limits. I should like—not just because everyone else has done it—to congratulate you on your elevation to the Chair. There can be few greater honours in this country than to sit in the Chair of the House of Commons. I hope that you will have the honour to sit in that Chair for many years to come. As with so many other great honours, great responsibilities go with it. To have sat through 56 speeches in a debate that has lasted for 16 hours seems to me to be a fairly heavy price to pay for that honour, but no doubt you will carry it very well indeed.

One of the traditions of the House is to refer to those who have made maiden speeches in the debate. The fact that their stamina has not been up to surviving to this stage means that they will be faced with the well-known expression in the House of Commons, "I shall look forward to reading your speech in *Hansard*", which is the equivalent of, "My cheque is in the post" and, "I shall respect you even more in the morning, darling." I am sure that on Friday morning they will look intently at *Hansard* for Wednesday to see what was said about them.

I begin with the maiden speeches of the hon. Members for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith), for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) and for Monmouth (Mr. Evans). I do so for no other specific reason than that they are still here and are still, apparently, conscious. That stands in their favour. The hon. Member for Chingford came to the House with a speech that had many echoes of his predecessor, who cannot and will not be forgotten easily in the House. His courage, shown after the Brighton bombing, and his transparent love and care for his injured wife, Margaret, were as much an inspiration to many hon. Members as his political views were a complete turn-off. I am confident that Mr. Norman Tebbit would take that as a great compliment, coming from this side of the House. The hon. Member for Chingford spoke with fluency and conviction. We look forward to hearing him again.

The hon. Member for Harborough spoke with style, skill and modesty. He follows Sir John Farr whom we remember with great affection. The hon. Member for Monmouth was obviously a lawyer. The moment he stood up one knew that all that was missing was the invoice that normally accompanies any advice given by a lawyer to any audiences. I remember that when the present Secretary of State for Defence was a mere Back Bencher, he said to a dinner for lawyers in Glasgow, "Knowing how much it costs to speak to one of you, I am greatly complimented to be speaking to 200 of you." The hon. Member for Monmouth deployed an argument with which I did not agree, but he did it with some style. He reminded us of both his predecessors, who also made an impression in this House.

As for the speeches of those hon. Members who are not here at the moment—I am sure that none has returned, although some of them are probably coming in for breakfast and, if I keep this going for long enough, who knows, the compliments may coincide with their presence—my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope) impressed the House with his humour and with the warmth of his tribute to his defeated predecessor. I went to campaign in Hyndburn in 1987 when the Conservative majority was 21. Not, I am sure, as a consequence of my visit, the Conservative majority went up to 2,200. Therefore, my hon. Friend the new Member for Hyndburn is probably quite glad that I did not go to help him in this election campaign. He certainly spoke fluently and with a sense of humour, which is one of the most valuable commodities that one can deploy in the House of Commons. I am sure that he will learn quickly that a sense of humour must be deployed with some aplomb.

My hon. Friend reminded us of a previous hon. Member for Hyndburn, when the constituency was called Accrington, Mr. Arthur Davidson. He is still remembered with great affection. He and I were Opposition defence

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spokesmen before we were sacked in 1981. Mr. Arthur Davidson was a Queen's counsel. He moved an amendment to the Army Bill, which would have had, he thought, the effect of removing homosexuality as a capital offence in the armed forces. After he withdrew the amendment, the Clerk at the Table told that Queen's counsel that, due to a flaw in the drafting, the amendment would have made homosexuality compulsory in the Army. We might have been remembering Mr. Arthur Davidson for even greater reasons.

My hon. Friends the Members for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) and for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) are Members of the European Parliament, and therefore I know them extremely well. They both are friends. I am one of the few people in the House who are able to recognise or even to speak to more than half a dozen Members of the European Parliament from both sides of the political divide. My hon. Friends come with formidable reputations from that House. In following people such as Frank Haynes and Jack Ashley, they follow people of enormous stature. Both spoke with immense authority. The force of their convictions will help the House in its future considerations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr Gunnell) also comes from a formidable background. A major local government figure, he brings great expertise in the European dimension. My hon. Friend is a former leader of West Yorkshire county council. I know him well. He follows Merlyn Rees, who is a former holder of some of the great offices of state and also a friend of mine. The Morley part of my hon. Friend's constituency was held for an-all-too brief period by one of my closest friends, Ken Woolmer. I am sure that my hon. Friend will follow him with the same assiduity.

I also know the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan), because I met him when he was the BBC's Europe correspondent. He is one of the few people who will manage the transition well from one side of the television camera to the other. He impressed all hon. Members by his ability to make a speech of enormous authority and fluency without a single note. The vigour of his contribution and the fact that he has followed at close quarters the changing dimensions of Europe will be readily drawn on in future. I warned him that I would probably blight his career for ever with over-lavish praise for his maiden speech, so I shall restrict myself to saying that the House was impressed by what he said.

The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) made balanced contribution, given the traumas that he must have faced, as did the hon. Member for Monmouth, in fighting a highly publicised by-election and losing. Having fought a highly publicised by-election and won. I know how traumatic that can be. It is possible only to imagine that, by losing, one loses more that one's livelihood and expectations. The hon. Member for Ribble Valley follows, before Mike Carr, David Waddington, now Lord Waddington. I am the Member of Parliament for Hamilton—the first Hamilton of 22 Hamiltons in the world. One of the most celebrated Hamiltons is the capital of Bermuda. As David Waddington was my pair when he was Home Secretary, I look forward to a pairing arrangement between Hamilton in Lanarkshire and Hamilton in Bermuda, where there is a slight differential in unemployment rate.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I have inherited Mr. David Waddington's agent in Perth and Kinross and he is now in residence. I also met the prospective governor of Bermuda and told him that I hoped that he was not going to give up his processional uniform. He told me that he had been measured for his feathers yesterday.

Mr. Robertson I am sure that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) could give the prospective governor lessons in feathers any day of the week. Nothing that the governor will wear out there will make him look more flamboyant that the outfit worn at 6.40 am by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross, who used to be my Member of Parliament.

Several hon. Members took the courtesy to apologise for their absence during the wind-up speeches although even more did not. I received a letter from my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), which read:

"Dear George,
Tam and I have to go off for a TV broadcast on Maastricht. If we miss your winding-up speech, will you accept our apologies?"

As both of them said that they were going to vote against the party line—one with the Government and the other not even voting for the reasoned amendment—I take it that that is an informal pairing arrangement. If only they had known to hang about until the winding-up speeches, they could have appeared live on breakfast television instead of being in the studio.

We are considering a major treaty and a major Bill. Our lengthy debate is a proper reflection of the importance that the House places on the subject. However, in this debate and in Committee, we must remember that the Maastricht treaty does not represent a conclusion: it is a stage in a process of continuing European integration which is not static, but dynamic. It cannot therefore be judged simply on the snapshot that the treaty represents.

The treaty is neither as rigid nor as iron cast as its critics said that it would be. Nor is it as far reaching or as significant as the visionaries would have had us believe at the end of last year. Instead, it is a compromise step forward. It is a cautious compromise of the 12 nation states in the long-term practical integration of Europe's nations.

The Labour party has campaigned for several years for much of what the treaty contains. The Government resisted much of that, but they accepted certain aspects at Maastricht in Holland in December. For example, we called for more democratically accountable institutions in the Community. The Government said no to that, but signed up to it in the treaty. We argued for majority voting on the environment and for certain areas in the social sphere. The Government argued against that, but signed up at Maastricht. We argued for a more positive role for the European Parliament in relation to majority voting in the Council of Ministers. The Government said, "No way", but they signed up to it at Maastricht.

We also argued for more new competences to take into account other areas such as public health, education and youth training. The Government said no to new competences, but they signed up to them at Maastricht. We said that there should be a role for the regions and that

is in the treaty. We said that there should be voting rights for Community citizens in local government elections and European elections. The Government said no, but that is in the treaty.

We said that there should be a Community industry policy to balance the Community's internal market policy. The Government said, "No way", but they signed up to it in the treaty. We also said that regional policy had to be an integral part of building the internal market in the Community. The Government, who oppose regional policy at home and who said that it had no place in Europe, signed up to a cohesion fund and strengthened structural funds in the treaty.

The objective of the 12 nations on political union was to create a more co-operative, more democratic and more effective Community. There was progress in those areas. However, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said earlier, the Bill is not the treaty. We measure the Bill in relation to the principal defect—a unique British defect in the treaty. The social chapter is not applicable to this country. It is a glaring omission which is recognised and understood by the Prime Minister's fellow Conservative Heads of Government all over Europe. The social policy protocol which forced the other 11 countries to take the desired and sensible majority voting procedures outside the treaty is a simple monstrosity which has led to the Government's condemnation by their peer group in Europe.

In February the other Conservative Heads of Government in the Community said in a resolution:

"The Conference . . . deplores, in this context, the fact that the British Prime Minister and leader of the British Conservative Party took a negative position in Maastricht concerning European Political Union, particularly with regard to a common social policy."

But while all this was happening, and on the day that the general election was called, to a man and woman all the Conservative Members of the European Parliament signed up for the European People's party grouping within the European Parliament. That meant that they signed up to a declaration which says:

"The bringing about of the Internal Market is unthinkable without the establishment of the social area, because a reduction in the level of protection afforded by social and labour regulations would have serious complications for employment and the social condition of the worker."

Every British Conservative MEP has signed up to that declaration. They are full members of the overtly federalist arm of the European People's party in the European Parliament.

A dangerous suspicion has been left in the atmosphere of Europe that if the United Kingdom can opt out of the social policy provisions of the European Communities treaties, others may opt out of perhaps environmental law or even internal market law and, as a consequence, endanger all that has been achieved in the Community to date.

After a debate of this length, it is a cliché to say that we must look to the future and not to the past. I hesitate about using such clichés, because they sound so self-evident. But some hon. Members from both sides of the House who have spoken do not seem to realise that the old past, the old certainties and freedoms of movement and maneouvrability, and the old flexibilities that we used to enjoy as a nation state, simply no longer exist. Those people are in danger of making the grave mistake of confusing the trappings of independence and sovereignty, which so many small nation statelets in the world suffer from such as stamps, flags, United Nations seats and even bicameral legislatures, with real independence and sovereignty, which is an illusion for all but the strongest economies in the world.

The treaty has to be seen and measured not against what might be, might have been or even what was when my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield presided over the energy Council of Ministers some 20 years ago, but against the world that we face today, with a dramatically interdependent and inescapable set of relationships within Europe. Sixty per cent. of Britain's exports are sold within the European Community. As just more than a third of our GDP is exported, that means that one fifth of Britain's GDP and, therefore, a fifth of all Britain's jobs depend directly on sales to other member states. That does not count the jobs that are indirectly involved. With that interdependence, we cannot escape, in or out of the EC or the ERM, the effects on all of us of the dominant influence of Europe's strongest economy—Germany. It is still strong, despite the problems that it faces, and it is still growing, in stark contrast to the British economy.

So our sovereignty—our sovereign ability to go it alone as if we could just cast off the handcuffs of EC membership to determine our own interest rates, our own ideal and profitable exchange rates, and our own public sector deficit—is just a myth. It is a myth, as the queue of new applicants to the European Community amply illustrates. France, Italy, Austria, Sweden and even Switzerland are not joining up as some act of selfless altruism to the European Community. They are doing it because they want to get back some sovereignty over decisions that have already gone from their countries and from the control of their Parliaments.

I admire and greatly respect Germany. I have a deep affection for the German people. I wear, with enormous pride, the insignia of the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, but, as a British politician, I do not want the British economy to be run from Frankfurt. The treaty goes a small way towards creating the structure that will give us back some of our independence. It is filled with defects and in sore need of improvement. It must face up to the challenges that unemployment and lack of growth throughout the EC will cause in terms of strife and racialism, which is increasing.

However, it is a start. If we have the willingness as a country, we can ensure that we campaign and that the right criteria are pursued so that we are not trapped in a monetarist mould and are able to make an impact on the evils stalking the corridors of Europe, which are a serious danger to all of us. It is a small and a flawed movement forwards, but the House has given it fair consideration today. Undoubtedly, it will arrive at a sensible conclusion tomorrow, by voting for our reasoned amendment.

6.51 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Garel-Jones): This is the first time that I have addressed the House with you in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I join other Members who have congratulated you. I shall begin to sum up today's debate by quoting from the treaty that we are discussing in a way that will give you special pleasure, because before you took your place in the Chair you had a reputation in the House as one of the doughtiest campaigners on behalf of animal

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welfare. I know that it will give you pleasure to know that we have included in the treaty a declaration of animal welfare which ensures that the Community, when implementing Community legislation on the common agricultural policy, transport, the internal market and research, pays full regard to the welfare requirements of animals.

This has been a good debate. As the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said, 54 right hon. and hon. Gentlemen have spoken——

Mr. George Robertson: And Ladies.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes, and Ladies. It has been worth staying to the end of the debate to hear the speeches from my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn). I shall return to those, because they had a special message for our general debate.

The debate was opened by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and by the Leader of the Opposition, who quoted from a recent speech in which Hans-Dietrich Genscher said that there was no point in harking back to yesterday's dreams. Although one is pleased that the Opposition seem to have deserted the position on Europe that they held for so long, the difficulty that they face can be judged by the amendment moved by the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), which still harks back to yesterday's dreams. That is not surprising, as the Labour party has to conduct an internal discussion about the sort of socialism—or whatever one is supposed to call it these days—that it will present to the British public in the coming years. It is not surprising that the amendment harks back to socialism, which is why it is not a convincing one. That is why many of the speeches from the Opposition have demonstrated a complete range of choices. Some Opposition Members will vote for the amendment, some right hon. Members of the Opposition will vote against it, while the Members of the Liberal Democrat party and of the nationalist parties will vote with the Government in favour of Second Reading.

The confusion on the Labour Benches does not hide the significance of the debate. I do not wish to detain the House, but I shall try to refer to most of the speeches. What emerged from the debate, as my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) pointed out, is the fact that this is perhaps the first really important debate that we have had on matters concerning the European Community where a kind of consensus has begun to emerge. That consensus means that, at least, no party seriously questions membership of the Community. That may mean that, in the coming years, we shall have more debates of the kind that we have started to have today, where we are able to address not whether we belong to the Community, but the kind of Community that we want to see as a British Parliament and depending on the individual political interests of our respective parties.

The debate was opened from the Back Benches by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who described himself as a born-again Back Bencher. He made two important points. First, he referred to the events that have taken place in eastern Europe. I am sure that the House will agree with him that those events have changed everything—they must change our view not only of the Community, but of the way in which it will develop in the future. I was particularly pleased to note the way in which he welcomed the achievement of the Government in the negotiation of setting up the pillars of intergovernmental co-operation. I hope that my right hon. Friend and other long-standing sceptics of the Community will begin to find that the new mechanisms within the wider union will make it possible for them not only to take part in debates on the Community—my right hon. Friend always does—but to feel more able to participate in our efforts in the Community.

My right hon. Friend called for more contact with other Parliaments and said that he would like to know what they are saying about the issues before us. I am sure that he will be pleased to know that the treaty contains within it the prospect of a conference of Parliaments. Most people who agree with that proposal hope that it will not be anything like the assizes to which my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central referred. Many of those who were responsible for setting up the assizes would want the conference of Parliaments to resemble them as little as possible.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) spoke about the federal character of the union. In effect he said that that was what other people think. However, he recognised that not only had the word federal been removed from the treaty but that the Government had managed to restrain the centripetal forces that seem to have operated for past 20 years in the Community. Nevertheless, because others take a different view, he chose to believe that that view would triumph.

The speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) interested the House substantially. Many hon. and right hon. Members referred not only to the interior justice pillar but the problem of article 8(A) in so far as it refers to the free movement of people within the Community. My right hon. Friend described the new justice and interior pillar, which he had a considerable hand in setting up with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, prior to the Maastricht negotiations. That pillar will be one of the tests of intergovernmental co-operation. I hope that, with the support of Opposition Members, the Conservative party will take up the cause of law and order on a European scale, where appropriate, with the same enthusiasm and drive as we have carried that cause forward at home. By 1996 we must demonstrate to our partners in the Community that that new pillar of European law and order works and delivers benefits in the struggle against terrorism, organised international crime and drugs. It must deliver benefits that will help to consolidate those pillars, because I cannot disguise from the House the fact that many people in the Community regard them as staging posts on the way to a more centralised structure. We must argue about that and demonstrate that those pillars will provide law and order benefits for our citizens.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley spoke about two areas of competence that are not in the intergovernmental pillar: the visa lists and the common format for the visas, and what he referred to as the "double lock". That means that all matters relating to law and order and interior justice, except the visa lists and the common visa format, cannot be removed from the interior justice pillar without the unanimous agreement of the Council of Ministers, so we have a veto there. And even if

that unanimous agreement is obtained, it must then be agreed by all the individual Parliaments of the 12 member states.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley, who was Home Secretary at the time and took a special interest in that matter, can claim to have secured for us within the Community an interior justice pillar that gives us an opportunity, if we are prepared to show leadership, to demonstrate to our partners that it can be an effective arm of European co-operation outside the scope of the treaty.

Our postion on article 8A of the Single European Act is well known. The former Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, negotiated not only the final eight words of article 8A

" in accordance with the provisions of the treaty,"

but a protocol signed by all 12 member states. We believe that our legal position is strong and we shall fight on it. But the point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley was making was about political climate, and the European Court of Justice and judges in this country and in the Supreme Court in the United States must ultimately be influenced by political opinion. Political opinion within the Community is moving very much on that issue, because the issue of false asylum seekers and illegal immigration is now at the top of the agenda in Germany, France and Italy. The climate of opinion on the problems that we all face will assist what we regard as our strong legal position.

One of the steps that we in Britain can take, without being sanctimonious in any way, is to say that we have pretty strict immigration controls, which work. As was recognised only two or three months ago by the Council of Europe, however, we also have the most comprehensive and complete legislation of any European country to protect against racial discrimination. While none of us is entirely satisfied with the state of race relations in Britain and we think that they could be better, we know that they are improving and we are proud of the way the immigrant communities in our country are becoming more involved in the mainstream of social life.

We should say to our European partners, "We want to retain our tough immigration controls as we believe that it is right to do so and they provide the only way that we as an island state can exercise control, but do not imagine for a minute that we do not have good and improving race relations: we have no fascist or communist parties—they do not have so much as a toe-hold in public life in Britain, and we intend to keep it that way."

As the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said, the Liberal Democrats have taken a consistent approach to the European Economic Community for 40 years. He knows that his party's position is not shared by Conservative Members. The Liberal Democrats have consistently supported what I suppose in European terms would be called the federal vocation. However, as I have said many times, it is not a mortal sin to believe in the federal vocation. There are even one or two Conservative Members who believe in it and, I believe, a growing number in the Labour party. Neither the Conservative party nor the Government believe in the federal vocation, but the Liberal Democrats have stuck honourably to their approach and naturally we welcome their support in the Lobby.

I was sorry to miss the speech of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), as he is always an interesting, distinguished and provocative speaker. I suspect from the notes given to me by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury that the right hon. Gentleman probably made the most capable contribution of those Opposition Members who believe that economic and monetary union is a shift of power to central bankers who would impose on a socialist party and a socialist Government an unwelcome restraint on borrowing. They believe that it would inhibit the pursuit of the sort of socialist society that the right hon. Gentleman still wants. A number of Opposition Members, to whom I shall refer later, made the same points in what I suspect was a less effective way than the right hon. Member for Llanelli.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who, in the previous Parliament, was Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, also made a distinguished contribution. His principal point, and one on which the Government lay great stress, was that co-operation between the 12 member states—whether via the interior justice pillar or the common foreign and security pillar—was not inferior to co-operation between the member states under the treaty of Rome. Indeed, it could be argued that, particularly in the spheres of foreign affairs and interior justice, co-operation will be stronger and more effective if it is entered into willingly by the member states than if it is achieved through the mechanisms of the treaty of Rome.

The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), in what I thought was his maiden speech, talked about trooping through the Lobby on behalf of the Whips—[HON. MEMBERS: "It was not his maiden speech."] That is excellent, as it means that I can be a little bit more robust with him than I otherwise might have been.

The hon. Member for Hemsworth complained about having to troop through the Lobbies. He is a relatively new Member; this House has a number of deficiencies, but, as he spends more time here, he will find that although the Whips do exercise power and attempt to get Members to troop through the Lobbies, this House is not quite so empty a vessel as he implied it was.

The hon. Gentleman made the mistake of saying that the scrutiny procedures of this House are the worst in Europe. He was immediately put right on that by his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who chairs the Scrutiny Committee. Scrutiny in this House may not be as good as we should like it to be, and I dare say that it is susceptible of improvement, but, as the hon. Member for Newham, South pointed out, together with that of the Danes ours is easily the most effective scrutiny of draft EC legislation in the Community.

We did not think it right in a treaty affecting this or other Parliaments to include a provision that would bind the way in which Parliaments operate, but we inserted a declaration at the end of the treaty urging national Governments to lay draft EC legislation before their national Parliaments in time for them to study and comment on it before Ministers go to Brussels. I am pleased to tell the House that in the course of debates in the French Assembly on the ratification process, the opposition have already demanded that this should take place, and have referred to our procedures. I hope that in the next three or four years we shall try to improve our procedures and that other Parliaments will begin to take scrutiny of the EC legislation as seriously as we do.

I can asure the House that no Minister from the United Kingdom goes to the Council to debate these issues without the opinions of hon. Members and their constituents ringing in his ears.

Mr. Robertson: While looking around at the ratification process in other Community countries, has the Minister noticed that the only other significant European leader to agree with the British Conservative party about the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty is Mr. Jean-Marie Le Pen of the French National Front? Should not the Minister and his party be ashamed of that?

Mr. Garel-Jones: If the hon. Gentleman hangs around for three or four years he may find that great rafts of social legislation do not emerge from the 11 member states who signed the separate protocol. He may find that the social ambitions of the Community continue to be pursued through the treaty and the 12 member states. One of the reasons why the public enthusiasm of some of our partners for this protocol will not translate into legislation through the 11 is that they realise, some of them with terror, that the British will no longer be in the forum—*[Interruption.]* Only time will tell, but I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that the public enthusiasm of some member states for the protocol will not translate into a great raft of social legislation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) told the House that he had voted both for the entry of Britain into the EC and for the Single European Act. I am sorry that he now regards the Bill as having what I think he called a gravitational pull towards a unitary state. I and, I think, most of my colleagues believe the exact opposite to be the case. This is the first time that the gravitational pull has begun to move in the other direction. If my hon. Friend carries out his declared intention to vote against the Government tomorrow, the European cause will have lost a substantial ally.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made a powerful and characteristic speech. He seemed to say that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office now ran the whole Government, and in secret. In fact, the opposite is true, because one of the wise decisions taken by this country when it entered the Community was that each Department would be responsible for its own business in the Community. That has served Britain well over the years—Ministers from various Departments attend Council meetings to look after their business and they liaise through the Cabinet Office. The right hon. Gentleman persists in believing that the Foreign Office runs everything in secret. He describes the Committee of Permanent Representatives as a mysterious group of Sir Humphries, and he now believes that we are governed solely by the royal prerogative. The best reply to him was given by the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald).

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) also made an interesting contribution and supported in particular the right given to Parliament by clause 2—the right for this Parliament to make its decision at the time and in the light of the prevailing circumstances if the Government of the day were to recommend moving to stage 3 of economic and monetary union. I am sure that that is right, and some of the countries in the EC who have begun to discuss such issues post-Maastricht wish that they had also made the same wise provision that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister achieved for the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope), who was making his maiden speech, did so elegantly and modestly. He was witty and he amused the House, saying that he had been spotted on television by his mother and upbraided for not bowing to Madam Speaker when he left the Chamber. I think that the feeling of being scalded by mother is one with which many Conservative Members are familiar. We were extremely grateful to him for his remarks about Ken Hargreaves, which were generous but accurate. They were well received by the House. The hon. Member for Hyndburn spoke well and with modesty, and I am sure the House will look forward to hearing him again.

Also making a maiden speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) spoke of his predecessor, Sir David Price. Sir David was liked and respected by members of all parties and did a substantial amount of work for the disabled not only on Select Committees but throughout his time in the House. He was an extremely popular and well-liked hon. Member. His successor spoke fluently and without notes and showed sensible support for what I would call a new model Europe. He mentioned one issue on which one cannot place too much emphasis, and that is the way in which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has built a series of personal relationships of trust—not only with Chancellor Kohl but with other leaders in the Community—which has been of enormous benefit to the country. Politics—whether from the Government or the Opposition—depend to a large extent on personal relationships. I hope that the House—not we as a Government—will take up the exhortations in the declarations at the end of the treaty to build relationships with the European Parliament and to take part in the conference of parliaments. I hope also that individual Members will do all that they can to build personal relationships with the European Parliament and with other European politicians.

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) described the visit of Her Majesty the Queen to the European Parliament. I am sure that his description of the visit gave pleasure to all who heard it. He also spoke, as did several other hon. Members, of the Committee of the Regions. One of the benefits of this debate and consideration of the Bill in Committee, which we are soon to undertake, is that right hon. and hon. Members, especially those with strong regional interests, will be enabled to put their views about the Committee of the Regions to the Government on the Floor of the House at a time when the Government have not yet proceeded to come to any conclusions. Right hon. and hon. Members will have the opportunity to put forward their views about the way in which the Committee should be managed.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who held an important position in the previous Parliament as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, made an interesting speech. I would take up two matters with him. First, I think that it is wrong to suggest that we should have before us now a consolidated text. I say that that is wrong because I think that the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members would regard it as perhaps presumptuous to say the least if the Government and the Community were already printing a final consolidated version of the amended treaty before it had been approved by the House and by other parliaments throughout the Community and ratified.

I recognise that it is quite a complicated matter to read one document from the other, as my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central said. Many hon. Members take the trouble to read these documents and are well capable of doing so. I think that it is more important that

the Community, Brussels and the Government should not be seen to be presuming that all the ratification processes will take place before the national parliaments have had an opportunity to examine them.

The hon. Member for Newham, South talked about article 3B of the treaty, which is the subsidiarity text to which several hon. Members have referred. The hon. Gentleman has raised the matter before. I have sought, clearly inadequately, to put his mind at rest. The fact about article 3B, which he seems not yet to have taken on board, is that there are three paragraphs, the third of which consists of one sentence which reads:

"Any action by the Community shall not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of this Treaty".

The previous paragraph refers to areas that do not fall within the Community's exclusive competence. The reason that the final sentence is separated from that paragraph is to ensure that even in the areas of the Community's exclusive competence no action should be taken that goes "beyond what is necessary". I think that I have given the hon. Gentleman the answer previously and I hope that that will be sufficient.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) wrote to me, as he did to the hon. Member for Hamilton, and even as I speak he is perhaps appearing on breakfast television. Hon. Members may be interested to know—I had forgotten this—that the hon. Member for Linlithgow is one of the 67 Labour Members who rebelled against their own party and voted for Britain's accession to the European Community in the first place. The hon. Gentleman, in a characteristic speech, told the House that he intended to continue with the honourable position that he has held since then. He and, I dare say, the deputy leader of the Labour party, who is one of the four remaining Members, will be joining us in the Lobby tomorrow to support the Bill. I cannot think of any Labour Member with whom it would give me more pleasure to go through the Lobby than the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) made a characteristic speech. Before the election, he returned from his place of permanent exile and actually voted for the Government in our debate at that time on Maastricht. He obviously found that an unnerving experience. While he was urging the House today to continue to fight against Bonapartism, which I think is his new description of the Community, it was clear that he was returning to exile. I regret to say that he put us under notice that he would not be supporting us in the division tomorrow.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) made an intelligent and supportive speech about the Community. The hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith), whom I have not encountered before in debate, is a Member of the European Parliament. He made the same speech as his right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli, but it was not so well chosen, so well phrased or so intelligent as that of his right hon. Friend. Having listened to the hon. Gentleman, all I can say is that the European Parliament's gain will be our loss.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) paid a tribute to Norman Tebbit which I believe moved not just Conservative Members but Opposition Members. Norman Tebbit was a quite extraordinary politician—was what our former colleague, Chris Patten, would describe as a very big beast of the jungle. In personal terms, he was an extremely courageous man. As my hon. Friend said—and, indeed, the hon. Member for Hamilton generously acknowledged—Norman Tebbit courageously bore the tremendous adversity and tragedy that was thrust upon him. He was an inspiration to many people.

My hon. Friend made a lucid speech. He fears creeping federalism, but I think that his fears are misplaced. The treaty begins to turn the tide against that. We certainly look forward to hearing more from him.

I note that the Whip is looking at me anxiously, so I shall conclude by referring to the remaining maiden speech and to the speeches of my two hon. Friends who are still in the Chamber. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) spoke of his predecessor, Mr. Jack Ashley—a man who was widely admired throughout the House. He, too, has been an inspiration to many. The hon. Gentleman is also still a Member of the European Parliament and I am sure that he will make many interesting and important contributions to these debates.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) spoke about our former colleague Sir John Farr, who was a courageous and respected colleague. The one way that we would all describe him is as a country man and an English man in every sense. He, too, had to bear quite a degree of personal adversity in his last few years in the House, and he did so with real courage. We are grateful to our hon. Friend for what he had to say about our former colleague. I was also grateful to him for the way he described his approach to the Community, which he commended to us—that we should work the clay rather than smash the pot. That is a felicitous turn of phrase.

The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) made a maiden speech and my right hon. and hon. Friends were pleased with his remarks about Merlyn Rees. Merlyn held the highest offices in the land, but he remained a modest and widely popular colleague in the House. The hon. Gentleman clearly sees that investment in his constituency is investment generally looking for the wider European market and he, too, will clearly be a regular and important contributor to our debates on these matters.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) has had the harrowing experience of losing a by-election and then winning the election. I and, I know, other colleagues were particularly pleased to hear what he had to say about our noble Friend Lord Waddington. I served unber David Waddington in the Whips Office. He was a tough, trad-right hard, honourable Conservative and he was well liked as Chief Whip and in the other offices that he held. My hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley made a fluent and well-crafted speech. He welcomed the principle of subsidiarity and intergovernmental co-operation and he, too, will be a frequent contributor to these debates.

The hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) spoke of our former colleague Chris Chope. We were particularly grateful to him for the generous way in which he spoke of Chris Chope, whom he described as a conviction politician who did not trim, and certainly he was that—he may have seemed a tough man, and politically he probably was, but he was also, in the way that conviction politicians often are, a very nice man. We are sorry that he is not with us and we hope to see him back soon.

Mr. George Robertson: I intrude because I managed to miss my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) from my record of the maiden speeches. I would have said that he spoke strongly and, at 2 am, he commanded more attention than that time in the morning would have suggested. He has a great contribution to make. He defeated Chris Chope, who was at Dundee university with me. My hon. Friend defeated a formidable opponent and for that very reason he will make his contribution to the House.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I agree with that. The hon. Member for Itchen described Southampton as an outward-looking European city and it sounds to me as though he will be an outward-looking European Member and we shall look forward to hearing from him.

There were a number of other speeches from the Opposition Benches. One of the characteristics of the unreconstructed ones was that the hon. Members still seemed to be searching for a socialist Europe. Just as they will not achieve a socialism here in Britain, they will not achieve a socialist Europe either.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) expressed an interest in article 3B, subsidiarity, and the answer that I gave earlier also takes up my hon. Friend's point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) rightly drew attention to the number of debates in the House before the Maastricht treaty was signed. He made the point, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) that that gives the Prime Minister a considerable mandate not only prior to his going to Maastricht but on his return, having achieved the objectives that he set out for the House. That gives him the right to come to the House today and to ask for the support of the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) made a confident and robust speech of the kind that we would perhaps take for granted from members of his profession. Nevertheless I thank him for his warm remarks about Sir John Stradling Thomas, with whom I also served in the Whips Office. I believe that he was happiest as deputy Chief Whip, and his success in that job was due to the enormous range of friendships that he built up in all parts of the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth can be assured that his remarks will have been appreciated by right hon. Friends and hon. Members in all parts of the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth asked a number of pertinent questions, and he gave the lie to the fears expressed by some, when he pointed out that the treaty refers specifically to the open market economy. He expressed the belief shared by a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends that the treaty as it now stands provides a charter for an open market and a liberal approach to the economy. My hon. Friends the Members for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) and for Stamford and Spalding (Mr Davies) made typically crisp and effective speeches.

Two speeches in particular caught my attention. Those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who know my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central well will not disagree when I say that he is in many ways a typical prototype Englishman. That is what he is, and that is what he represents. My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central cogently expressed many of the fears and anxieties felt by middle England over the past 10 or 15 years about our membership of the EC. Will it take away the basic rights of the House? Will it make the country that we know and love substantially different? Shall we be forced into assizes, in which we find ourselves confronted by 250 composite motions? All those fears are genuine, and they are held by a substantial number of my hon. Friend's constituents and my own.

I always listen carefully to the speeches of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn). Scottish Members of Parliament—three are present in the Chamber now—will appreciate that even when my hon. and learned Friend is at his most witty and amusing, and sometimes at this most outrageous, one should pay close attention to his words. My hon. and learned Friend made two important points. He asked what is the history of Europe, and he gave the answer—conflict. Just so. He said also that the treaty can mean what we want it to mean. That is the real achievement of Maastricht.

For the first time I can remember, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has taken by the throat the European agenda and the centripetal forces which, for the past 20 or 30 years, have seemed to allow the Community to make the assured progress towards the finalité politique that Jacques Delors seeks. My right hon. Friend helped to shape a new construction called the European union.

I cannot tell my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central for certain that the Maastricht treaty is the moment when the tide turned, or that I am certain that we have won the arguments in respect of the intergovernmental pillars and the position that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sought to secure for the Western European Union and its relationship with NATO. What I can tell him is that, thanks to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has done, the treaty really can mean what we want it to mean. I can also tell him that, if he joins us in the Lobby tomorrow—and if Opposition Members do so as well—we can make the treaty mean what we want it to mean. We can build a European union which is not leading to the centralist finalité politique but will enable us and other nation states to co-operate in a way that my hon. Friend will find satisfactory.

Debate adjourned.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

To be resumed tomorrow.

Trident Project (Small Companies)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker].*

7.40 am

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I have waited for a long time to make my speech. I never thought that I would do so at breakfast time. As a very willing and, perhaps, active member of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House—which recommended that all-night sittings should cease and that the next Parliament should deal with such matters—I think it ironic that I should now be embarking on a speech at 7.40 am.

First, let me welcome the Minister to the Dispatch Box. He has been a Back Bencher for many years; I have admired him ever since I first entered the House and I think that his promotion is well deserved. I wish him well in his new office.

I want to discuss the progress of the Trident construction project in my constituency and the failure of the Property Services Agency and the Ministry of Defence to acknowledge the plight of companies—mainly small companies—working on the project. Numerous companies have gone bust and perhaps thousands of people have become unemployed because of the shambles of that project. The scheme has constantly been hit by delay—so much so that the MOD brought in Bovis to do an external audit. That audit has been undertaken, but, sadly—despite the recommendations of the Select Committee on Defence and others—it has not been made public. Why has it been kept secret? I think that it would help everyone to find out exactly what was happening.

Although I have maintained regular contact with MOD and the PSA and have spoken about the matter in a previous Adjournment debate and a Royal Navy debate, I feel that little progress has been made. Contractors have been waiting for years to receive money owed to them; a sizeable number have had to fold because of that prolonged wait. To date, the MOD has said that it is nothing to do with them—that it is a matter for the Property Services Agency.

With that in mind, I ask the Minister to turn his attention to the matter. In his Budget speech the Chancellor said:

"I want to see the Government's good record on the payment of bills extended to firms which win Government contracts. From next month, those successfully negotiating a contract with a Government Department will be required to include clauses in their own contracts with subcontractors which provide for the prompt payment of bills, ordinarily within 30 days of receiving a valid invoice. I believe that Government have set a good example, and I hope that large companies will follow."—[*Official Report,* 10 March 1992; Vol. 205 c. 753.]

Manifestly, the Government have not set a good example; at the Trident development contractors are waiting for years for payments. I ask the Minister to convince me—and others—that what the Chancellor said was not empty rhetoric but principled comment, so that we can get something done for small business people. Judgment will be made on the basis of the outcome of this debate.

There is a history of problems with the Trident project. I have been trying—through my membership of the Select Committee on Defence and my role as constituency Member of Parliament—to uncover the real problem. I well remember, in the Select Committee, questioning David Heyhoe, assistant Under-Secretary of State, Fleet Support. The reference is House of Commons 337.

I asked Mr. Heyhoe why there had been such enormous problems and delays and whether it was because of fast track planning. He answered:

"I am not quite sure whether 'fast track' is a term of art and whether, strictly speaking, this is fast track, but I understand your point. It is the case with these projects, principally because of the time factor relating to the programme of the submarines, we proceeded with construction before designs were completed. That is certainly the case."

That is what the problem is all about.

Is it, as the MoD has said, contractor-subcontractor relationship and nothing to do with the Ministry? In some cases it is contractor-subcontractor, but in other cases it is not. I will provide the Minister with three examples.

The first concerns a contractor-subcontractor relationship and is the case of G. and G. Wilkie Reinforcements, which undertook steel fixing work on the construction project. The company has been owed over £700,000 by Tarmac, the main contractor. Mr. Wilkie, in a telephone call to me, said:

"The exact figure is £702,433·47. It is a figure that is engraved on my heart. It still haunts me."

And well it should. Last October, he wrote to the Prime Minister, forwarding his claims to the PSA, which sent them on to Tarmac; only after this did Tarmac offer him £4,000 plus retention. That is a ridiculous sum. Mr. Wilkie is now unemployed and cannot even draw social security benefit. He can support his claim that Tarmac will not even give him the breakdown in tonnage payments and daywork hours. His company was sequestrated on 28 November last year, on the instructions of the Inland Revenue, and now his house is threatened. That should not have happened.

The second case also involves contractor versus sub, sub, subcontractor, and an individual who stays in my constituency, Tom Douglas, who owns Douglas Diving Services. His company was contracted by Roxby Engineering to do diving services. Roxby was subcontracted by Babcox, which in turn was subcontracted by Cementation. As a sub, sub, subcontractor, he had no relationship with the MOD or PSA. He said that that was a large part of the problem. He sued for £200,000 but was offered £13,000 by Roxby. In a telephone call to Babcox Construction Ltd., which he tells me that he has on tape, the company says that it has paid the money to Roxby, but Roxby is not giving him his money. He quite rightly said that the PSA management teams on the site could ascertain why Roxby has not paid him. I ask the Minister to turn his attention to that.

The third and most recent complaint is not a contractor-subcontractor problem. In this case, the main contractor is Trafalgar House, and the subcontractor is W. H. McKay and Sons, structural engineers and steel fabricators of Ross-shire. Both companies are owed money by PSA. This is where we get near the kernel of the problem, beyond the contractor-subcontractor relationship, and where we fall into the black hole of project mismanagement.

Mr. McKay's company, formed in 1973 with 150 employees, had an annual turnover of £9 million in 1989, having traded successfully. Then it became involved in the contract at Faslane. Now it has been turned from a highly liquid company to one that has an overdraft of £1·5

[Mr. John McFall]

million to £2 million. That gentleman was in my home on Friday, spending two to three hours explaining what his difficulties are. He has had to put £500,000 of his own money, his pension fund and possessions, into the company to keep it going. He is involved in a life and death struggle. He tells me that Trafalgar House, the main contractor, has not kept any money back from him, but it can afford to hold out because it is a big company. However, he cannot afford to do so. His case is quite detailed and I will provide copies of the letters that he sent to me so that the Minister can look at the details.

Let us consider Mr. McKay's case globally. He is owed £3·87 million in direct costs, £2·47 million in overhead costs, £2·5 million in prolongation costs, and £625,000 in non-productive costs—a total of £9·5 million. The PSA has already paid him £4·6 million, leaving a total shortfall of £4·9 million. To date, he has been paid some money on account, but that has been used as a carrot by the PSA. For the purposes of this debate I shall look at one project, the northern test development facility, which incorporates the mast and periscope building, for which his company subcontracted for the structural steelwork.

The original start date was 5 December 1989, with completion of the work 15 weeks later on 31 March 1990. Eventually, the firm started work on 10 May 1990. However, 123 weeks later it is still involved in structural steelwork variations. To date, there have been 475 variations to the original contract as a result of late design information. Is that due to the design team's imcompetence or to indecision by the Ministry of Defence regarding the ultimate needs? Whatever the reason, a duty of care should exist towards such firms. That duty, however, clearly does not exist.

The design team's architects for the mast and periscope building, Crouch Hall, put out incomplete drawings for that building. The firm had been under strict instructions to get them out. The first drawing, however, did not show the tower for the periscope—the very heart of the building. There was a blank space for it and it was said that the drawing for the tower was to follow. The tower was not designed until nine months after the award of the contract. That is what I call fast tracking.

I realise that drawings can be changed a number of times, whether at tender stage or at drawing stage. However, one needs a construction issue to construct works according to the drawings. In some instances it did not arrive on the desk until well after completion. Why did that happen? There are supervising order instructions. I am informed that up to 60,000 have been put forward at nil value. If they are put forward at nil value, there is nothing to pay the contractors and subcontractors who are at the end of the line. People get into trouble as they progressively make their way down the line.

In the case of W. H. McKay, who has a BS5750 certificate, that was waived several times for the repositioning of the cladding rails on the mast and periscope building. The company was told, on such a sensitive project, to go ahead with the cladding rails, using unapproved drawings. That is clear evidence of panic and an indication of the chaotic state of that project. That has implications for quality and also for peace of mind, particularly when one realises that this applies to the Trident submarines. It is not reassuring. It is still less reassuring to find that a fire broke out last July in the mast and periscope building. It completely engulfed the building. The fire was caused by a breather membrane that was used between the aluminium steel plates encompassing the building. It is a type of insulation called Sisalkraft. It caught fire and the entire building was engulfed within half an hour.

That is bad enough in any building, but the consequences are unimaginable in a building that is to house the Trident submarines and ancillary products. According to my information, Sisalkraft is present in all the other buildings used for the Trident development. I have been told that when a match is put to Sisalkraft in the open it burns just like an ordinary piece of paper. The implications are enormous. If construction could go wrong anywhere, it could certainly go horrendously wrong in this case. That situation must be corrected, irrespective of cost.

I am looking for an undertaking from the Minister on the safety point, but I am also looking for an undertaking that the Ministry of Defence will cease the Pontius Pilate approach to the project and will show genuine interest in the plight of those subcontractors—small businesses which the Chancellor called the engine of the economy. I am looking for the Minister to take a personal interest, keep me and the subcontrators informed, and get the mess sorted out.

I conclude by referring to George Younger, a recent former Secretary of State for Defence, who is quoted in *Construction Weekly* of 2 October 1991. He certainly speaks for me and others in saying:

> "The general principle must be that if delays take place that are the fault of no particular contractor, it is up to the PSA to ensure that these contractors do not suffer."

I am looking to the Minister to address the case of the contractors and the safety implications. I am looking for genuine interest on the Minister's part so that we can follow up the case and get the mess sorted out for those small business people.

7.55 am

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I am grateful for the opportunity to intervene in this Adjournment debate. I strongly support my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), who spoke with considerable diligence and authority. We look forward to hearing from the Minister.

I am interested in the case because some subcontractors employed people in my constituency. They drew my attention to the fact that they were dismissed because the company was in deep trouble and latterly went into liquidation, again as a result of a failure by the main contractor to pay subcontractors. The more that I dig into the matter the more I come to the same conclusion as did my hon. Friend.

There is something seriously wrong in a system whereby public money is given to a main contractor for work that has been done and has been satisfactorily completed, but that public money is not passed on to the subcontractors. Millions of pounds of public money are involved. Companies are going bust and people are being intimidated into not making the row that they should.

The scandal and the misuse of public money are not coming to the surface simply because those subcontractors will need future contracts. They are told that if they would like to sue, they can, but because of the enormous legal costs involved, they cannot afford to do so. Of course, in

future, even with new company names, they will be looking for work from the contractors. The human casualties are our constituents, who are thrown out of work when the money is available and should be paid. The more that I examine the matter the more I think that there is something wrong with the system.

The Chancellor is right to say that the Government will use good practice. We hope that, further down the chain, that good practice will be continued. Perhaps we should examine some European Community countries and their legal systems. Such matters should be subject to the criminal law so that public authorities could take action on behalf of the subcontractors. There is a scandal and something needs to be done about it. The Ministry of Defence is in charge of the contracts and it should take some responsibility. I look forward, as I am sure my hon. Friend does, to hearing from the Minister some reassurance for the innocent victims of a very sick system.

7.58 am

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): Even after a sleepless all-night sitting lasting until the abnormal parliamentary hour of 7.58 am, the House should be grateful to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) for raising the subject of the problems that have been faced by small firms in relation to the Trident programme. The hon. Gentleman has been a tenacious champion of the interests of small firms in his constituency and elsewhere for some time now and I salute his persistence and his eloquence on the subject.

I also thank him for his kind words of welcome. I am a ministerial debutant. However, after 18 years on the Back Benches, and as the veteran of many Adjournment debates, some of which I initiated, at this early stage in my career, I have a great deal of sympathy with any hon. Member who raises a serious matter in the way that the hon. Member for Dumbarton raised his subject today. The hon. Gentleman brought along a formidable Front-Bench reinforcement in the shape of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who made his second speech of the morning. Although I cannot follow his interesting deviations into Community law and procedures in the matter, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his contribution to this short debate.

I hope today to be able to say something helpful about the McKay problem and, more generally, about Government policy on all new defence contracts, including the Trident programme. I want first to refer more broadly to the Trident programme and its civil construction element.

As the hon. Member for Dumbarton is aware from his regular and welcome visits to the Clyde submarine base, there has been remarkable progress on the ground in physical terms. The new 85,000 tonnes explosives handling jetty at Coulport and the roads surrounding it have been described as one of the modern wonders of the civil engineering world. A range of new facilities are being built at Faslane, largely for our future strategic nuclear deterrent, but also for the long-term support of the other submarines that will be based there.

All that has constituted an enormous technical challenge to which Scottish and British companies of all sizes have responded splendidly. At its peak, 3,500 construction jobs were created at Faslane and Coulport and more than 1,000 businesses directly or indirectly benefited from the Trident programme. Most of those companies have operated successfully and well. The problem, which I admit exists, should be seen in the context of those wider and much more satisfactory arrangements.

Not only does the project confer immediate benefits in terms of wages, salaries and profits, but it challenges the technical skills of companies and employees alike. The project has helped to develop a strong technological base of excellence for the future and that must augur well for the reputation and future economic prospects of the Scottish and British construction industry.

Inevitably with a project of that magnitude, there will be problems from time to time. I readily acknowledge that the construction element of the Trident programme has proved to be considerably more complicated, expensive and difficult than we at the Ministry of Defence and our project managers—PSA Projects—had hoped. However, I must emphasise that the problems that we have heard about are not special to that programme or to Faslane or Coulport. They seem to be endemic to virtually all mega projects in the construction industry.

Claims of late payment or underpayment are commonplace in the construction industry. It is not an industry for the faint hearted. The gaps between claims submitted and the payment that the client thinks is justified may be enormous. For example, in my constituency near where the channel tunnel is under construction, the newspapers report that contractors' claims are well over £1 billion and that project has nothing directly to do with the Government.

I am happy to say that claims for the Trident programme are nowhere near that figure. The point is that claims, counter-claims and a confrontational atmosphere in which strong allegations and strong rebuttals are often made, are all part of the culture in the world of big construction projects.

In such a culture, it is a regrettable fact of life that smaller subcontractors can sometimes get squeezed for a variety of reasons, some of which are unfair reasons. We heard today of the sad story of the Wilkie company and the Douglas Diving Services company. The Government regret any such happenings in the industry and, above all, the practice sometimes known as "subbie-bashing" or subcontractor bashing. Where the Government have a locus standi in the matter, both my Department and the PSA will do everything we can to eliminate, or at least diminish, those practices.

However, I must make the point that for most past or existing contracts neither we nor the PSA are in a position to see, let alone interfere with, the commercial arrangements that have been made between main contractors and their subcontractors. Nor, indeed, can we see arrangements made between subcontractors and those who are contracted to them still further down the line.

In a moment, I will set out our policy on future contracts. As the hon. Gentleman rightly acknowledged, that policy has been influenced by the Budget statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But first may I turn to some of the specific items that were raised in the debate. The hon. Member for Dumbarton was good enough to give me some notice of the McKay case. I listened attentively and sympathetically to the points and pleas that he made. It would not be right for me

[Mr. Jonathan Aitken]

to comment on the exceedingly complicated matters of detail that appear to lie behind the saga or, indeed, on any matters of fact that were raised in the case.

However, in response to the entreaties of the hon. Member for Dumbarton, I can say that although the PSA is not directly involved in the subcontractual arrangements, it will discuss the case as a matter of urgency with the main contractor Trafalgar House and, with its agreement, with W. H. McKay direct. The PSA will endeavour to be helpful to both parties in resolving disputed matters and will play the role of honest broker. In addition the PSA will examine claims from the contractors. I shall write to the hon. Member for Dumbarton with a full report as soon as possible. I hope that he will accept that those moves are intended to be helpful and that they will prove to be so.

May I also deal with the serious matter that the hon. Member for Dumbarton raised about the Sisalkraft material? He queried whether the material was a serious fire risk. I gladly give him the undertaking for which he asked, which was to have the matter seriously investigated. Safety is always paramount in Ministry of Defence projects, particularly on one of this strategic and security importance. We shall certainly examine the serious points that he raised on Sisalkraft.

Lastly, I emphasise that Departments and agencies are required to pay their bills promptly. Both the Ministry of Defence and PSA pay their bills to their contractors promptly. For the future, the subcontractors who have been the main subject of the debate should be helped by the measures that were announced in the Budget this year to help with the problems of late and delayed payments.

One measure will, I am sure, be welcomed by the hon. Gentleman and the House. On all future contracts let by my Department, including any covering Coulport or Faslane, there will be a requirement on the prime or main contractor to pay his subcontractors within a reasonable period. That period may vary, but typically it will be within 30 days of completion of the agreed work or submission to the contractor of a valid invoice. That requirement will be legally enforceable by the subcontractor. In addition, in considering the award of future contracts, my Department will take account of each contractor's track record in this respect. I hope that that announcement will serve as an important amber light and warning to any contractors who have been less than fair to their subcontractors in those respects.

Although it should help, I do not pretend that this measure alone will lead to the end of subbie-bashing on the Trident development project at Faslane and Coulport. As I have explained, we have to live with existing contracts. Unfortunately it will not be possible to introduce the new measure to existing contracts because to do so would involve renegotiation, which would be a difficult and undoubtedly expensive business, since contractors would insist on extra payments for contractual changes.

What is required is a more businesslike and far-sighted commercial approach by those relatively few contractors who abuse the system. I will encourage my officials and our project managers, PSA Projects, to press home to all contractors that their reputation, as well as their effective performance, depend on their treating their subcontractors fairly and honourably. We have a three-pronged approach of practical help in resolving disputes, firm contractual requirements to enforce timely payments and bringing home to contractors the true results of their actions. I am convinced that that is the surest way to clamp down on the sort of problems and subbie-bashing that the hon. Gentleman has raised with such eloquence.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman feels that the Ministry of Defence does not have a Pontius Pilate approach, even though often we cannot become directly involved in the contractual and subcontractual arrangements of contracts already in place. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will feel that I have pointed to various ways in which we can be helpful to him on the important points that he made in this early-morning debate.

Question put and agreed to

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes past Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 21 May 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ALLIANCE AND LEICESTER (GIROBANK) BILL *(By Order)*

Read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (JUBILEE) BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 4 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Constitutional Reform

1. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to respond to the letter of 6 May of the hon. Member for Linlithgow about his proposals for resolving the constitutional dilemma of Northern Irish representation at Westminster, in consequence of the restoration of devolved powers to Stormont.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I replied to the hon. Member on 19 May.

Mr. Dalyell: On what basis does a Member of Parliament from Londonderry vote on the most delicate matters in relation to London and Linlithgow, but not Londonderry?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The so-called West Lothian debate will engage us in our consideration of the matters that are being dealt with under strand 1 of the political talks. No doubt the question will be no more straightforward in 1992 than it has been in the past.

Mr. Canavan: Would not it be a deplorable double standard, even by this Government's low standards, if they were to agree to resurrect the Stormont Parliament while refusing to set up a Scottish Parliament? How can an entire nation be deprived of a democratic right that is given to a mere six counties of another nation?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: For the moment I shall do my best to look after the affairs of Northern Ireland. I understand what lies behind the hon. Gentleman's question, but it must be remembered that Scotland already has a far greater degree of devolved government than Northern Ireland currently enjoys. Also, experience suggests that it is usually unwise to draw general conclusions from the special circumstances of Northern Ireland.

Metal-framed Windows

2. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when Northern Ireland Housing Executive tenants may expect to have metal-framed tivewindows replaced.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Robert Atkins): This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that metal-framed windows are replaced when they can no longer be serviced or when they reach the end of their useful economic life. The executive expects that all remaining metal windows will be replaced over the next 15 years.

Mr. Walker: I thank the Minister for that informative answer. Is he aware of the great problems that the windows are causing for tenants, particularly in terms of maintenance and heat loss? Will he now grasp the nettle and order their replacement as a matter of the utmost urgency?

Mr. Atkins: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. He will know better than I, at least at this early stage in my tenure of office, that this is a substantial programme which will take time to resolve and will cost a great deal of money. As I understand it, the Housing Executive has decided that, over a period of time and as and when there is refurbishment or renovation to be done, the windows will be replaced. I am mindful of what the hon. Gentleman said about the concerns being expressed throughout parts of Northern Ireland about the quality of metal-framed windows and the Housing Executive will act upon it as soon as it can.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does the Minister realise that it is unfair for all the metal windows to be replaced on one housing estate and for the equally rubbishy windows on another estate not to be touched at all? Will he inquire as to when a metal window ceases to be weatherproof and will he inspect the windows that are causing the controversy now and reach his own conclusion, irrespective of the Housing Executive?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman has raised an entirely fair point. I have not yet been able to see all the windows in all the estates, but it is merely a matter of time before I do so. Clearly, the chairman of the Housing Executive is as concerned as the hon. Gentleman that this programme should be implemented as soon as possible. Clearly, we cannot do it all at once, but we will try.

Mr. McGrady: Does the Minister agree that this problem is a minor but important symptom of the Housing Executive's budget shortfall, which will be £14·1 million, £14·5 million next year and £12 million the following year? It is unable to fulfil the new-build programme, let alone tackle the unfitness problem in rural parts of Northern Ireland. My rural constituents' houses suffer from the highest levels of unfitness. Is that not symptomatic of the Government's not giving sufficient funding to enable the Housing Executive to carry out the job that it was given by the Government?

Mr. Atkins: The one thing that I have learned since I have been in Northern Ireland is how highly regarded the Housing Executive is throughout the Province. I know that the hon. Gentleman will share that support with me. Certain deficiencies need to be remedied, and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for finance will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said about funds for the Housing Executive. However, it has done pretty well so far, and it is my intention that it should continue to do well.

Intergovernmental Conference

3. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next expects a meeting of the intergovernmental conference to take place; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Mates): The two Governments announced at the last meeting of the intergovernmental conference on 27 April that, in order to allow further opportunity for political talks to take place, there would be no further meeting of the conference before the week beginning 27 July 1992.

Mr. Bellingham: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment, which was extremely good news. I can think of no one better qualified. Will he confirm that, despite the representations from the Irish Government, there are no plans to withdraw the 3rd battalion of the Parachute Regiment?

Mr. Mates: Yes, I can confirm that. The deployment of Army units in support of the RUC in Northern Ireland is a matter for the General Officer Commanding, but we shall seek to provide the maximum support with regiments of the British Army, which are provided by the Ministry of Defence to the GOC in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maginnis: Is not the Minister frustrated and angered by the intergovernmental council and seven years of the Anglo-Irish Conference, which, we were told, would end frustration and create consensus? David Andrews, the Irish Republic's Minister for Foreign Affairs, continues to indulge in megaphone diplomacy to the extent that he exacerbates problems. We know that we have difficulties, but he pours oil on the fire and embarrasses everyone who is working to bring a degree of nomality to the streets of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: I am certainly not frustrated by the process of the intergovernmental talks, but I strongly agree with the hon. Gentleman that we set up the mechanism so that these difficulties could be examined and representations made in private. I further agree with the hon. Gentleman that, in these circumstances, megaphone diplomacy seldom helps.

Mr. Budgen: Would not constitutional progress in Northern Ireland be better advanced by setting up a proper system of local government so that issues such as metal windows could be decided by the people of Northern Ireland, rather than having grandiose schemes that pander to the impertinent interference of the Americans and of the citizens of the Republic in the affairs of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Mates: All these matters, and others, are being discussed in the talks that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is holding with the political parties in Northern Ireland, and they can all be resolved if those talks are successful.

Mr. Mallon: Will the Minister of State confirm that recent events in Coalisland have been matters for discussion within the secretariat of the Anglo-Irish Conference? Will he assure the House that at the next meeting serious consideration will be given to those incidents—which include one soldier in the area losing both legs—and to the brutality and offensive behaviour of the Parachute Regiment towards members of the public? In the meantime, will he take steps to ensure that the Parachute Regiment is not allowed to act as a recruiting officer for the IRA in Coalisland or anywhere else in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Mates: It is important to remember that there have been two separate incidents in Coalisland over the past 10 days. The first, which involved a bar, is now being investigated by the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the normal, proper way. Meanwhile, the commanding officer of the 3rd battalion of the Parachute Regiment has suspended one of his officers from duty. It is unusual for such a matter to be made public, and the fact that that happened is a measure of how seriously my right hon. and

learned Friend the Secretary of State and I regard such matters. We are determined that the Army, acting in support of the RUC, will always keep within the law. The hon. Gentleman will understand that I do not wish to go further into the matter, because inquiries are proceeding.

In the second incident a group of soldiers from another regiment were set upon by a gang of thugs motivated by the IRA. Those are not my words but those of Father Dennis Faul, who condemned the attack. During the attack weapons were taken from the soldiers—one weapon is still missing—and it was in response to that incident that troops were deployed to restore the situation. I am as determined as the hon. Gentleman to keep all operations of the security forces within the law, but if the IRA stopped the terrorist attacks, there would be no need for our troops to be on the streets of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Wilkinson: I pay tribute to my hon. and gallant Friend on his first day at the Dispatch Box. Will he make it clear to the Government of the Irish Republic that it is wholly unhelpful for their Foreign Minister to suggest which British regiments should be on the streets of Northern Ireland, and wholly offensive for the same Minister openly to criticise the Parachute Regiment? Will he make it clear to the Government of the Republic that the sooner they clear the IRA out of the South, the sooner British troops will be able to be withdrawn from the North.

Mr. Mates: I understand what my hon. Friend says about what was said in Dublin, but as I have said, it is best if such matters are kept for private discussion, and we have a mechanism for allowing that. It is not helpful to make such discussions public. My hon. Friend spoke about the Parachute Regiment. It is important to make it clear that although the incident last week in Coalisland involved the 3rd battalion of the Parachute Regiment, members of another battalion of the same regiment and their families have been living in Northern Ireland on a long tour for the past year and doing their job properly. It is certainly not for any foreign Government to dictate where and how troops should be deployed in Northern Ireland, but it is not a job for the Northern Ireland Office either; it is a job for the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. McNamara: I welcome the Minister of State to his new post as chief of staff to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, as opposed to his previous position as chief of staff for the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)—now the President of the Board of Trade. Can he assure the House that the Government are still committed to the principle of police primacy, and can he say what steps are being taken to ensure that the RUC retains effective control of security force operations—and especially that the deployment of troops should be under the overall control of the RUC? What steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence of incidents such as those that occurred recently in Coalisland?

Is the Minister aware that while, very properly, there can be no part of Northern Ireland where the rule of law does not run, nevertheless the Government, and especially the GOC, should pay attention to the sensitivities of local politicians, especially when they have advance warning from a person so distinguished in that regard as the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). They should pay a bit more attention to such matters. If they did there would be fewer opportunities for such incidents.

Mr. Mates: Yes, I can confirm the primacy of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. That is well established and we will do nothing other than reinforce that policy. The GOC acts in support of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and all the Army commanders down the line act in support of the respective police commanders. I should add that a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary was present with the patrol during the first incident at Coalisland. Difficulties do arise, but he was there.

Higher Education

4. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the number of students in higher education; and what the figure was in 1978-79.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): The figure for 1978-79 was 16,864. In the 1990-91 academic year, the number of students undertaking higher education in Northern Ireland was 30,293. That is an 80 per cent. increase. Northern Ireland has the highest rate of participation in higher education in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Marshall: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his reappointment to the Northern Ireland Office. Does he agree that the dramatic increase of 80 per cent. underlines the Government's commitment to further and higher education? May we have an assurance that quality will not be sacrificed in the continued expansion of higher education?

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his words. The higher education participation rate in Northern Ireland of 27 per cent. compares with 19 per cent. in Great Britain. It is forecast to increase still further to 35 per cent. in 1995-96. That shows the Government's success in meeting the high demand. It is right that quality assurance and quality assessment measures must match the demand for higher education. That is why legislation to match the requirement for quality which is already here in Great Britain will be introduced in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Beggs: To what extent is the increased enrolment due to the steady growth in numbers of students from the Irish Republic? What is the cost to British taxpayers of paying tuition fees for that group? To what extent, if any, is the British taxpayer reimbursed from Europe? Can the Minister give us an assurance that Northern Ireland students are not losing places as standards for entry are increased as a means of selecting students for places in higher education in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hanley: I assure the hon. Gentleman that students from Northern Ireland are not losing places for the reason that he gave. There is competition, but the increase that I described shows that the demand is being matched by places.

In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question, this year approximately 1,900 students from the Republic of Ireland are studying in Northern Ireland, as opposed to 1,800 students last year. Under European Community

rules, the statutory grants are met by the taxpayers of the country in which the education takes place. I stress that it is statutory grants which are paid. Statutory grants do not exist in the Republic of Ireland; all grants are discretionary, so there is a disparity between the way in which grants are paid in the two countries. I am currently examining that matter.

Mr. Stott: The Minister may well be right when he says that the number of students in Northern Ireland has increased. I should be surprised if that were not the case. A combination of Government policies means that students in Northern Ireland face severe financial hardship. Is the Minister aware that the citizens advice bureau in Belfast published a report last year which highlighted the real difficulties facing students in Northern Ireland? The report shows that the withdrawal of benefits and the falling real value of student grants have combined with a shortage of summer jobs and high levels of unemployment to make students face severe financial difficulties. If the Minister has not read the report, will he please do so? Will he act on its recommendations, because there is a serious problem in student finance in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hanley: I have indeed read the report and I am considering what it says. There is no evidence at the moment to suggest that the new system of support has had a detrimental effect on participation rates or increased withdrawals from courses. On the contrary, applications and new admissions in Northern Ireland have reached record levels in the current academic year. I admit, however, that we must look at the whole system of student support in the light of conditions in Northern Ireland; but I am satisfied that no student is suffering from having to withdraw from a course except in very exceptional circumstances.

Constitutional Reform

5. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he proposes to recommend any change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.

11. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he proposes to instigate any amendments to the constitutional position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Government's position on the constitutional status of Northern Ireland is unequivocally clear. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom and will not cease to be so without the consent of a majority of the people who live there.

Mr. Nicholls: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply. Will he report to the House on the progress of the talks taking place at Stormont between the constitutional parties; and can he assess the prospects of those talks being brought to a successful conclusion?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I can report to the House that the talks which began in March of this year were resumed on 29 April, and that they continue. That that is so owes a great deal to the preparatory work initiated by my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), whose work is greatly respected in Northern Ireland and more widely.

I should like to express my gratitude to all who have taken part in the talks so far. There has been great value in the confidentiality that has been agreed upon, and I hope that the House will understand if I do not depart from that principle, because I believe that by maintaining it we have the best prospect of bringing the talks to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Paice: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the talks would be greatly assisted if the Irish Government took steps to amend their constitution to remove all those aspects in it that lay claim to Northern Ireland?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Government have welcomed the assurance of the Taoiseach that the question of articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution will be on the table at the appropriate stage of the political talks. They certainly have a deep significance.

Mr. John D. Taylor: The constitution of Northern Ireland covers not only its place in the United Kingdom but the means by which it is governed. Why does the Secretary of State continue to deny to the people of Northern Ireland the same rights in this Parliament that are extended to the people of England, Scotland and Wales? Why does he give to a foreign Government a greater role in the government of Northern Ireland than is given to the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am not at all sure what the hon. Gentleman means by the latter part of his question——

Mr. Taylor: The Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: That agreement gives the Government of the Republic of Ireland a consultative role which will be diminished with the advent of devolved government in Northern Ireland, to the extent that that devolved government has jurisdiction in Northern Ireland.

It is the purpose of the Government—I think, with the approval of the House—to harness the abundance of political talent that undoubtedly exists in Northern Ireland to the business of governing it. That is the policy of the British Government, and it is to secure it that the talks are taking place.

Mr. Hume: Does the Secretary of State agree that people who consistently require reassurance about their constitutional status but never accept such reassurance and keep on requiring more of it will never be reassured?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: That is perfectly legitimate question to ask the Secretary of State, but I have no hesitation in repeating the constitutional guarantee that has been on the statute book since 1973. There is no question of its being changed so long as it has the support of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Kilfedder: I commend the Secretary of State on the firm and unequivocal words that he used in answer to the original question. His remarks echo the firm words of the Prime Minister, who believes passionately in the unity of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern

Ireland and whose stance rebuffs those who believe that they can kill and mutilate and thereby weaken the resolve of Her Majesty's Government.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said at the beginning of his question. It is compatible with a reassertion of the constitutional guarantee to agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said about the absurdity of Westminster Ministers answering questions about such relatively minor matters as potholes and, dare I say it, metal window frames on housing estates. It is to overcome that, and to restore to the elected representatives of Northern Ireland a jurisdiction over matters that pertain to Northern Ireland, that we are striving in our constitutional talks.

Belfast-Dublin Rail Link

6. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the upgrading of the Belfast-Dublin rail link to be commenced and completed.

Mr. Atkins: I am advised that preparatory work should commence this summer and that the scheme is expected to take five years to complete.

Mr. Burns: That news will be warmly welcomed by both passengers and freight users in Ireland, and the development is to be encouraged for the help that it will give to greater economic development between the north and the south. How many trains a day will there be, and how long will the journey take?

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The essence of an improvement is that the trains should run faster that the journey time should be cut by 15 to 20 minutes and that there should be more trains running so as to provide a better service between the two parts of Ireland. In those circumstances, the sooner this happens, the better.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: What progress has been made in developing a new central rail terminal in Belfast? Will it be developed in conjunction with the rail line between Belfast and Dublin, bearing in mind the fact that a rail terminal is essential for the transport infrastructure of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Atkins: The consultants who looked at this did not suggest that there was any need for enhancement either in Belfast or in Dublin, but I know that this matter has raised its head, and the consultants will be looking at it when they meet in about a week's time. As the hon. Gentleman has raised the matter, I will have a close look at it and make sure that his concerns are studied.

Voting System

7. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to consider changing the voting system for elections in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: There are currently no plans to do so.

Mr. Hughes: I guessed as much. In that case, would Northern Ireland Ministers like to make representations to their colleagues in the Home Office, as it might end a ridiculous anomaly if, for the next European elections, the rest of the United Kingdom had the same voting system as Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic?

Mr. Hanley: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that there are special circumstances in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend accept that, in the last election, the existing voting system managed, out of 17 elected Members of Parliament, to produce five different political groupings, which is what the Liberal Democrats want to see throughout the country in their support for proportional representation? Would it not be better to get the mainland parties working in Northern Ireland to get elected there, so that, rather than voting for just local parties, people can vote for national parties?

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend's knowledge of Northern Ireland is second almost to none.

Mr. Trimble: No doubt the Minister will recall the Prime Minister, not long ago, describing proportional representation as an undemocractic form of government. The Minister might like then to consider why his Government retain proportional representation in part of the United Kingdom for local assembly elections, when we have them, and for European elections. Will he inform the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that, of all forms of proportional representation, we with experience of it can assure him that the single transferable vote is the worst of the lot?

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's question. He is living proof of the wisdom of the first-past-the-post system. I repeat what I said earlier. Northern Ireland has special circumstances, and therefore we shall deal with it specially.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

8. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further political initiative is being made within the Anglo-Irish Agreement towards a peaceable settlement of the Irish problem.

9. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further discussions he proposes to have with the Irish Government to improve the climate for progress within the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference held on 27 April agreed that, to allow a further opportunity for political talks to take place, there should be no further meeting of the conference before the week beginning 27 July. The two Governments are prepared to consider a new, more broadly based agreement or structure if such an agreement could be reached through direct discussion between all the parties concerned.

Mr. Etherington: May I first congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your election and wish you many years of fulfilment in the Chair? I also congratulate the Secretary of State on his appointment. The post could be described as a bed of nails, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman has my sympathy. I wish him well in his post.

Does the Secretary of State agree with me that since the partition in 1921 of Northern Ireland every Government have failed to solve the problem? Does he agree with me

also that, in line with the wishes of the majority of people in the United Kingdom, the Government should now look at trying to work towards the setting up of a free and united Ireland?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am most grateful for the less controversial part of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question in which he congratulated me. I do not need any sympathy for the job which I am privileged to hold at present. The future settlement of the conflicts and tensions between the two sides of the community in Northern Ireland will not be resolved by this or any other Government. They will be resolved by the people of Northern Ireland. If this Government can facilitate that process, that will bring to myself and my right hon. and hon. Friends great satisfaction. That is our determination.

Mr. Adley: In contradistinction to the situation in Scotland, is there not a clear cross-party consensus in this place between the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democratic parties among others as to how we should proceed with the Anglo-Irish Agreement—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—a broad consensus? That being so, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that it will remain his policy that the Anglo-Irish Agreement should continue in existence? Does he agree with me that it would be helpful if all politicians in Northern Ireland, especially those who clamour most loudly about maintaining the links with the United Kingdom, were to give support for the agreement, which commands the support of the political parties here?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It is the Government's policy to support and operate the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Equally, as I have said, the two Governments are prepared to consider a new and more broadly based agreement or structure if such an agreement could be reached through direct discussion between all the parties concerned. There are legitimate differences of opinion about the Anglo-Irish Agreement. My hon. Friend asked whether it would not be helpful if everybody agreed to support it. No doubt it would be extremely helpful if all agreed on the future for Northern Ireland, but we must deal with a rather different reality, and that is what we are approaching in the constitutional talks, which are continuing.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Secretary of State confirm to the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is up a siding and going nowhere? It has not led to peace, stability and reconciliation. In the light of the supplementary question of the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington), will the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that it would appear that there are more Irish in Sunderland than in Northern Ireland, where the people are against the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I think that I will leave the affairs of Sunderland to another time. The Anglo-Irish Agreement is in place and while it is it will be supported and operated by the British Government as it is by the Irish Government.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. and learned Friend really believe that it is appropriate that a foreign Government should continue to have a say in how part of the United Kingdom is governed?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: As I said earlier, it is generally unwise to draw general conclusions from the specific and peculiar circumstances of Northern Ireland. At the moment, I shall look forward, rather than back to the time some five years ago when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was debated and instituted. I think that I have said all that I can helpfully say today about the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. McNamara: I welcome the right hon. and learned Gentleman to his new post and join him in the tribute that he paid to his predecessor, the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke).

There is broad consensus in the House on the future of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and on the nature of the discussions that are taking place, which may or may not change the Anglo-Irish Agreement. If the talks are not successful, the Anglo-Irish Agreement remains.

The Opposition hope that the talks will be successful and we congratulate the participants on the discipline that they have shown so far. We hope also that the talks will develop into the widest range of the three strands, as originally considered. Is the Secretary of State yet in a position to say when he hopes to be able to call upon the services of Sir Ninian Stevens?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks. I agree with what he said about the future of the talks. As he will remember, last year it was agreed by all parties that the strands should be dealt with in series, and that strands 2 and 3 should be entered into within weeks of the beginning of the talks on strand 1. I cannot say more than that. The talks are progressing and I have that timetable very much in mind.

Pregnancy Advisory Services

10. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the provision of pregnancy advisory services in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Pregnancy advisory services are an integral part of the comprehensive family planning services that are available throughout Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Gorman: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Brook advisory service, a much respected body which helps women with pregnancy advice, is experiencing a great deal of difficulty and harassment in setting up in Northern Ireland? Is he further aware and concerned, as I am, that fellow citizens—women in Northern Ireland—cannot obtain the full range of pregnancy advice including termination, that is available to women here who want to regulate their families?

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend is right to say that there is some controversy about the establishment of a Brook clinic in Northern Ireland. The decision to establish such a clinic was taken by the Eastern health and social services board. It was, therefore, regarded as being required to sustain the health of people in Belfast. It will be established and it will probably have about two sessions a week staffed by Northern Ireland resident staff.

On the other half of my hon. Friend's question, the Abortion Act 1967 does not apply to Northern Ireland. It is not part of Northern Irish law and there are no plans to

change that. However, it would always be open to a Member of Parliament to introduce a private Member's Bill, should he so wish.

Mr. William Ross: Given the theocratic stance of the Government of the Irish Republic on these matters, surely the establishment of such a clinic is a matter of great sensitivity. Does the Minister therefore expect a considerable increase in the number of female tourists from the Irish Republic to Northern Ireland if those services are fully provided?

Mr. Hanley: I am not sure that that necessarily follows. The services provided are determined by the Eastern health and social services board, so the matter is decided on local requirements, with no consideration of the demand that might exist somewhere else. It was a controversial decision and it is being treated with great sensitivity. There is a very high level of teenage pregnancy in Belfast, which surely is not good for anybody.

Political Initiatives

12. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any further political initiatives relating to the Province; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The current political talks began on 9 March and reconvened on 29 April. They constitute a major initiative on the part of all concerned in them. My present concern is to facilitate their success.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Secretary of State agree that there have been at least half a dozen political initiatives during the past 25 years, yet the killing fields in Northern Ireland continue, British soldiers are blown to bits and the internecine warfare is on the increase? Is it not now high time for a fresh political initiative and for the Government to start drawing up plans for bringing out the British troops?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: That is not an attitude towards part of the United Kingdom and those who live in it, as by law they are entitled to, with which this Government or, I feel confident, any British Government would ever be associated. People who live in the United Kingdom are entitled to the protection of the full resources of the United Kingdom when confronted with the evil of terrorism, and under this Government they will receive that protection.

I do not dispute the hon. Gentleman's assertion that the killing continues and that the security position is far from what can be desired, but I do dispute his spirit of hopelessness that nothing can be done to remedy matters without pulling out the troops. Much can be done and that is what the talks are in part about. If the hon. Gentleman were to come to Northern Ireland, he would find there an even greater willingness to consider new ideas than even he is sometimes associated with.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 May.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Smith: The Prime Minister must be aware that this year there will be some 150,000 homeless families in Britain, that many more thousands of our fellow citizens are living in overcrowded and inadequate accommodation, that thousands of construction workers are unemployed and that local authorities have more than £6 billion worth of capital receipts which the Government do not allow them to use because of current Government rules. Will the Prime Minister now allow the local authorities to use their money to build the homes that are needed? Surely that is a matter of simple common sense, and of simple humanity, too.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Government have a homelessness programme on which more than £300 million was spent last year and which has produced about 17,000 permanent lettings during the past two years for the benefit of homeless families. Local authorities can still learn a great deal about value for money by looking at that programme and in the management of their housing affairs. We have no plans at present to change the present regulations on the release of capital resources.

Mr. Moate: Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement the other day that the sovereignty of the House was not up for grabs was warmly welcomed? Bearing in mind the fact that the original European Communities legislation was carried through in a way that precluded the possibility of any amendment whatever, will my right hon. Friend allow a rather more open-minded attitude to any amendments that might come forward to the current Bill which seek to strengthen the sovereignty of this Parliament in relation to future developments in the EC?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend will know, it is not possible to change the terms of the treaty, although that does not necessarily exclude extensive debate and, in certain circumstances, amendment. But the treaty that we have agreed is the treaty to which we shall be inviting the House to give its approval.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister recall saying on the radio in January:

"We"—

meaning himself—

"stopped . . . the repossessions before Christmas."

Would he still make that same claim now?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I think that the range of schemes that has been produced by the building societies has led to the stopping of many repossessions that would otherwise have taken place, and it is now quite clear that the number is falling away. Where people are entitled—it was to this point that I suspect that I was referring—to income support payments, those payments can be made and repossessions should not continue.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister was right to suspect what he was saying. It provoked exactly the same reaction in me. Does he recall that the Chancellor of the Exchequer promised in December that his mortgage rescue scheme would reduce repossessions by 40,000? Yet, according to replies from his own Ministers, in the first three months of this year, action was started against 42,000 families. Will

he not now concede that the scheme has been a complete flop and start taking steps to ensure that we have an effective scheme before thousands more families are put out of their homes?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that repossessions occur at any time—not just at times of difficulties. There have been repossessions at times when this country's economy has been the strongest ever known—and often they are because of domestic difficulties in the families themselves. Everyone regrets owner-occupiers losing their homes, but the right hon. Gentleman should acknowledge that only about 0·5 per cent. of home owners have had their properties repossessed. He ought to put that in the context of what happened in the past as well.

Mr. Kinnock: Does not the Prime Minister recognise that for the small percentage of home owners to which he referred, repossession is a 100 per cent. tragedy? Does he acknowledge that many more families are under intense pressures? Will he not address himself to the fact that it is necessary, in a country in which there could again be 80,000 repossessions this year, for the Government to introduce a proper mortgage rescue scheme? It makes no sense at all to put thousands of families out of their homes.

The Prime Minister: We have done so. As the right hon. Gentleman clearly did not take this on board last time, I reiterate that the measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor are helping people facing difficulties. Many lenders have agreed not to repossess where mortgage interest is covered by income support. That is the position. Rescheduling is proving particularly helpful. The right hon. Gentleman ought not to be so hypocritical. His party would have denied nearly 1·5 million people the opportunity to become home owners in the first place.

Dr. Michael Clark: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, at the last election, several old and disabled people in my constituency—and I suspect elsewhere—did not vote because doctors wanted to charge £8 for a sick note that would have allowed them a postal vote? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that situation ought not to prevail and that some greedy doctors should not deny old and disabled people the vote? Will he think about that matter and see what can be done in time for the next general election?

The Prime Minister: I was not aware of that situation, and I will invite my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health to examine it.

Fixed-term Parliaments

Q2. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation for fixed-term parliaments.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so. The present system serves the country well.

Mr. Mackinlay: Will the Prime Minister reflect that there will be disappointment across the political parties, and among democrats of no party, at his closed mind on the introduction of fixed-term Parliaments? It is wholly wrong that Prime Ministers of any party can manipulate the calendar—[HON. MEMBERS: "Question."] Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the capacity of any Prime Minister to manipulate the decision-making process by choosing the timing of a general election to create a window of opportunity is wholly undemocratic and betrays the right hon. Gentleman's bogus concern for reform?

The Prime Minister: I think that that question had more than a touch of sour grapes about it. We rightly have a fixed-term maximum for Parliaments and that will be retained. Flexibility within that maximum is part of our constitution. That is right and helpful and it is not going to be changed.

Q3. **Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ancram: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the early encouraging progress of the negotiations in Brussels on reforming the common agricultural policy? Will he congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on continuing firmly to resist the MacSharry proposals that would be so damaging to British agriculture? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if the agreement on the table is successfully concluded, that will result in a better than expected deal for British farmers which will be good for British consumers and provide a boost to the prospects of future world trade?

The Prime Minister: Progress does appear to be being made and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on that. I hope that that progress will be sustained today and that, however long the negotiations go on, it will lead to a settlement. The negotiations are continuing; they have not yet been concluded, as has been reported in some quarters. If we do succeed, it will be good news for the British farmer, the British consumer, the GATT negotiations, world trade and many developing countries.

Mr. Ashdown: The Prime Minister told us before the election that inflation was licked. The Chancellor told us on Tuesday that inflation was proving a hard nut to crack. Which is correct?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, if he looks at the input measures of inflation—particularly producer price inflation—he will find that it is now at its lowest level for almost 20 years and is forecast to be around 1·5 per cent. by mid-1993. I think that most people, bearing in mind our historical position, would regard that as inflation being licked.

Q4. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Gorman: When my right hon. Friend goes down to Rio for the Earth summit, will he find room in his bag for a copy of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration report? The report casts grave doubt on the concept of the greenhouse effect. Is my right hon. Friend aware that it points out, for example, that the evidence of holes in the ozone layer is extremely suspect and that there has been no appreciable increase in the

temperature of the earth over the past two decades? In the light of that, will he please continue to resist the blandishments of people who seek to impose a carbon energy tax—which would have a severe effect on our industry—on the ground that the whole concept of global warming will probably turn out to be poppycock?

The Prime Minister: I have a number of reports on the ozone layer, including the report produced by NASA. I know that a number of contrary views have been expressed about the cause and effect of the ozone layer. We do take the matter seriously and we shall therefore look very carefully at any proposals for a carbon tax from the European Community. There can, of course, be no question of the Community's unilaterally imposing a carbon tax on this country—or, I believe, of Europe's accepting such a tax itself—unless comparable action is taken by Japan, the United States and other competitor countries.

Mr. Hume: In the classless society that the Prime Minister tells us that he has built, how would he like to be unemployed? How would he like it if his family were in special need and if, instead of receiving a grant—as they could have before the right hon. Gentleman became Minister of State, Department of Health and Social Security—they received a loan from the social fund which they had to repay out of their unemployment benefit? Does the Prime Minister agree that the social fund is targeting the poor and recycling and intensifying poverty?

The Prime Minister: No, I do not agree with that. The hon. Gentleman would do well to bear in mind the reason for which the social fund was introduced, and the failures that existed in the old single payments scheme. Then, many people who were entitled to help fell through the system because they did not come into a particular category. The social fund was introduced to provide a degree of flexibility and that is what it has done. It has done it well and I believe that it has served its purpose very well indeed.

Q5. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that police officers who do well a difficult and often very dangerous job deserve our full confidence and support? Does he therefore welcome the review announced yesterday by our right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary which will do much to reinforce the determination of the police to continue to maintain public confidence in my own county of Wiltshire and throughout the country?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I very much welcome the review announced by my right hon. and learned Friend and I am delighted that the chairman of the Police Federation also gave it a generous welcome yesterday. In the fight against crime, it is essential that the police adopt every means of increasing their efficiency. I know that that is what the police wish to do; it is what the public wish to see them do; and I hope that the review will help to bring it about.

Mr. Robert Hughes: In relation to the Maxwell pensioners, has the Prime Minister seen the "Dear Colleague" letter sent out by the Secretary of State for Social Services in lieu of a statement, which says, of the Maxwell pensioners who are having their pension money stopped, "Hard cheese. Put yourself at the mercy of the social security system"? In relation to the premature winding up of pension schemes, the Secretary of State simply says that he does not think that that will happen. While I appreciate that today the Under-Secretary of State is seeing representatives of British International Helicopter employees, does not the Prime Minister accept that the Secretary of State's reaction is grossly inadequate? Will he therefore take personal charge and make sure that these people get justice?

The Prime Minister: I think that everyone in the House will sympathise with the plight of the Maxwell pensioners and scheme members. Every hon. Member knows how that problem came about. We have already promised that we shall secure pensions to the level of the guaranteed minimum pension for those who have been contracted out of SERPS since 1978, but until what precisely went wrong is a little clearer, we cannot sensibly say what should be done to put the matter right. The hon. Gentleman may know, however, that we intimated some time ago that the Government propose to review the framework of the law and regulations within which occupational pension schemes operate. We shall be making detailed announcements on the scope of that review shortly. Then, in due course, we shall respond to the Committee's detailed report and recommendations on Maxwell, but at the moment a great deal more information needs to be uncovered.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for the first week after the recess?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for the week following the spring Adjournment will be as follows:

TUESDAY 2 JUNE—Until about seven o'clock, Second Reading of the Finance Bill, followed by Committee and remaining stages of the Non-Domestic Rating Bill.

WEDNESDAY 3 JUNE AND THURSDAY 4 JUNE—Progress in Committee on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

FRIDAY 5 JUNE—Debate entitled "Tenants' Rights, Opportunities and Participation" on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 8 JUNE—Second Reading of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill.

Dr. Cunningham: May I ask the Leader of the House to think again about the business that he has just announced? Is it not clear that from all sides of the House there is tremendous pressure and a legitimate demand for a debate in the House on the plight of the Maxwell pensioners? There is no conceivable party political motive. It would simply enable the House to consider the difficulties in which many people have been placed as a result of the Maxwell fiasco.

Will the Leader of the House also think again about the business that he has announced and find time for a debate on the Earth summit in Rio? Is it not astonishing that the Government, in the form of the Prime Minister, are to be represented—and rightly so—at the United Nations conference in Rio de Janeiro but that this House has had no opportunity to debate the hugely important world affairs that are to be considered there? It is regrettable that a debate should be held in the other place before the Rio conference but that the Government have not found time for a debate here. I urge the Leader of the House to think again, to reconsider the business, and to arrange such a debate.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said only a few moments ago about the very difficult Maxwell case. I cannot add very much to what he said, except to underline the point that it will not be very long after the recess before my right hon. Friend expects to respond to the Select Committee and to announce details of the inquiry which has been promised into the framework of pension law.

As for the Earth summit in Rio, I have to repeat a point that I made when a similar request was made to me last week: that it is not very long since we had a six-day debate on the Gracious Speech, including a full day when environmental matters could have been discussed. That provided an adequate opportunity for the time being, but most certainly these are matters to which we shall need to return.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): Will my right hon. Friend find time after our return from the recess for a debate on the GATT negotiations? He will be aware how much our textile industry depends on the outcome of GATT and, although we realise that the main stumbling block is agriculture, it is nevertheless important for the Government to make a statement or for us to have a debate on the issue.

Mr. Newton: I note what my hon. Friend says. I am well aware of her justified concern about the matter but, at this moment, I cannot promise a debate immediately after the recess.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): May I make a strong plea to the Leader of the House to reconsider the business on the Committee stage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill? He must know that virtually no hon. Members will be here after tomorrow, which leaves us literally no time to consider amendments or to use the Library's facilities in advance of a debate due to begin on Wednesday of the following week. Surely it would make sense to postpone the debate until the week after or at least to ensure that we have no more than one day in the following week.

Mr. Newton: Of course, we are talking about a period very nearly two weeks—not one week—ahead, although I understand the right hon. Gentleman's point. However, I think that there is adequate time for those who have expressed so much interest in these matters, as he has done, to consider what they would wish to do, especially with regard to the Committee stage.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the welcome just given to the cost-cutting draft measures to reform the common agricultural policy, is my right hon. Friend aware that it causes a great deal of confusion when there are widespread rumours in Brussels that we shall end up spending an extra £3,000 million? Could we have an early statement from a Minister saying whether the cost-cutting reforms will cut costs or add to expenditure, because it is very important that we know before the recess?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that my hon. Friend can expect me to speculate about the final outcome or financial implications of talks which, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said only a few moments ago, are still continuing in Brussels. However, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will wish to make a statement to the House as soon as possible about the outcome.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Does the Leader of the House accept that his reply to the official Opposition's request for a debate on the Earth summit was inadequate? It seems strange that we have had two full days and most of one night on one debate—albeit an important debate on the future of Europe—but that, at the same time, the House will not be able, in advance of the Rio discussions, to express its views to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Newton: As I have said—I suppose that I should apologise for repeating myself, although that at least has the merit of consistency—in my judgment, the House has had opportunities to express its views on the issue. That is not to say that there will be no need for further debate in due course, but I cannot promise a debate in the week after the recess.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my right hon. Friend please find time

after the recess for a debate on the vexing question of under-age smoking and under-age drinking because parents are very concerned about the ease with which youngsters can get their hands on cigarettes and drink? As my right hon. Friend knows, much of today's crime is committed by youngsters and, therefore, a debate to explore that avenue and to get the message across to the Home Office might be valuable.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate in quite the form for which he asks, but he will be aware that the Government are working on an important statement on prevention policy and health promotion generally. I hope that it will not be too long before my hon. Friend has an opportunity to express his views in that context.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): In view of the Prime Minister's commitment to open government, will the Leader of the House undertake to reverse the trend whereby an increasing number of agencies reply to hon. Members by individual letters and do not publish in *Hansard* the answers that have previously been available not only to hon. Members but to people outside? That is a specific and clear attempt to hide basic and important information. Will the Leader of the House reverse that trend immediately?

Mr. Newton: Until a few weeks ago, I was the Minister in charge of one of the largest agencies and I can, at least, assure the hon. Lady, as I suspect she knows, that in no sense is there a deliberate attempt to hide or conceal information. Such answers are placed in the Library of the House and the Public Information Office, which puts them in the public domain. The Government wish to improve access to those letters and we have put proposals to the House authorities for their publication. I hope that an early decision can be taken once the House Committees are reconstituted.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): May I remind my right hon. Friend that the Earth summit is not just about the environment; it will cover the environment and development? The agenda is infinitely wider and has far more policy implications than a simple debate on the Queen's Speech on the whole of the environment, including that of this country. If we do not have a debate on the Earth summit before that conference takes place, we should have a statement on the Government's objectives so that we can measure their achievements while recognising all the difficulties involved. The issue is bigger than the environment; it involves the environment and development.

Mr. Newton: I hope that my hon. Friend, whose interest in these matters is well known to the House, did not take my answer as in any sense one intended to minimise the importance of the wide range of issues that will be discussed in Rio. I meant no more than that the House has had ample opportunity for a general debate, including a day devoted to environmental matters, in which it would have been perfectly in order to touch on development. I acknowledge the importance of those issues, and I note my hon. Friend's request for a statement.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Does the Leader of the House realise that 12 Members of Parliament spent more than 200 hours in the Select Committee on Members' Interests, producing three reports, none of which has been debated by the House or led to resolutions being passed, yet they deal with lobbying conflicts of interest of Chairmen of Select Committees and a revision of the rules relating to Members' interests? Why do the Government keep ducking this issue? Why can we not debate those reports and bring about the changes which we in the House want and which the public demand of Parliament?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's question, but I am afraid that I cannot add it to the business in the week after the recess.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will the Leader of the House arrange an early debate after the recess on a vexed law and order issue—the continual infringement of planning laws by traveller families throughout the country who continue illegally to occupy public and private property?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be aware that some commitments were made by the Conservative party on that issue during recent debates, as I will describe them, before the country a few weeks ago. I cannot give an undertaking about when proposals will be brought forward, but my hon. Friend can have no doubt of the importance that we attach to the issue.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Although I welcome the assurance of the Leader of the House that there will be an early debate on the Select Committee report on the Maxwell affair, he will acknowledge that the report refers to the future protection and security of occupational pension schemes. However, the Government do not seem to be aware that people in Leeds who worked for E. J. Arnold have had their pension cheques stopped and that, by the time we return after the recess, people who receive pensions from Petty's will have had their cheques stopped. When will the Government bring proposals for action to the House to help those totally innocent victims; or are the Government saying that those people will have to pay the price for weeks, months or perhaps years to come until the matter is legally sorted out?

Mr. Newton: I cannot add much to what I said earlier, but it fell rather short of the words that the hon. Gentleman sought to put into my mouth about promising a debate. I referred to the fact that my right hon. Friend will respond to the Select Committee. Its report from the previous Parliament contained a number of points not wildly dissimilar to those that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Maxwell pensioners will be lobbying the House on Monday 8 June. Although I appreciate that there cannot be a debate, will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security make a statement to the House on Thursday 4 June so that we can pass on to Maxwell pensioners in our constituencies the latest Government thinking on this matter?

Mr. Newton: Obviously my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has a considerable amount of work to do to ensure that there is a properly considered reply to the Select Committee and properly considered terms of reference and other arrangements for

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the review that has been undertaken. He will wish to make announcements about those matters as soon as possible, but I cannot commit him to Thursday 4 June.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West); May I draw the Leader of the House's attention to the early-day motions dealing with the cruelty of whaling? There will be an International Whaling Commission meeting in Glasgow in June. May we have a debate prior to that meeting so that the views of the House can be made known, particularly to the Japanese, who want to restore commercial whaling? Please may we have a debate on this issue, which is of considerable concern to the House and to people outside as well?

Mr. Newton: I suspect that the concern felt by the hon. Gentleman and hon. Members on both sides of the House is well known throughout the countries involved. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Government have consistently lent their support to a moratorium. They will continue to press the case for proper conservation and protection, and I hope that the further measures that the hon. Gentleman wishes to be taken will be considered when the International Whaling Commission meets in Glasgow at the end of June.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Will my right hon. Friend find time soon after the recess for a debate on broadcasting, particularly in relation to television rights for sport? Is he aware that many hon. Members on both sides of the House are greatly disturbed by the fact that next year many fans will be locked out of grounds that are being improved, such as those of Arsenal and Leeds United, and, due to the deal with British Sky Broadcasting, will be unable to watch the matches on television? That leads to the prospect of more disorder outside football grounds just when there has been a great improvement in that respect.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's concern, but I cannot undertake to arrange a debate in the first week after the recess.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the Leader of the House ensure that the terms of early-day motion 46 concerning the assassination of Brazilian street children is drawn to the Prime Minister's attention before he goes to Rio for the Earth summit?

[That this House welcomes the visit of Paulo Melo, Brazillian State Deputy for Rio and President of the Parliamentary Commission on the Assassination of Street Children; notes that in 1991 10,800 children in Rio alone suffered from violence and that 306 were killed; expresses concern that up to 20-30,000 children are currently on the streets in Rio, with 1-2,000 sleeping rough; and urges the Prime Minister, during his forthcoming visit to Brazil, to raise these matters with the Brazilian authorities and to assert the belief of this House that the killers of these children should be brought to justice.]

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, with 300 children being killed in Rio last year and a further 10,000 being tortured, this is an issue that the Prime Minister should draw to the attention of the Brazilian authorities and demand that those responsible—

Madam Speaker: Order. The House will remember that I made a statement last week in which I said that business questions must deal with the business coming before us the following week. I hope that hon. Members will bear that in mind. Questions must concern only next week's business.

Mr. Alton: On a point of order, Madam Speaker——

Madam Speaker: Order. May I take the point of order later?

Mr. Alton: My question referred specifically to an early-day motion on the Order Paper today signed by Members of all parties.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman was not asking for a debate next week; that is the point. Would the Leader of the House care to make a response?

Mr. Newton: If it will help, I am happy to respond. I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already noted the early-day motion, but I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's comments are drawn to his attention. As the hon. Gentleman will know, we are pressing the Brazilian authorities to take effective action to remedy the situation.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend please read the reports of business questions in the period immediately before the general election? If he does so, he will see that the Labour party did not want a debate on the Maxwell affair. It now seems that the Labour party has converted to the idea of a debate.

Does my right hon. Friend recognise that there is now all-party support for a debate on the Maxwell affair which should cover many aspects of the Labour party's performance in this matter, as well as the fact that City institutions have let the pensioners down badly? It is not the Government's fault, and it is not the Government's responsibility to bail out Maxwell pensioners. The City should bail them out as soon as possible.

Mr. Newton: I said a number of times when the Select Committee on Social Security published its report—a Committee of which my hon. Friend was a distinguished member and a report in which he played an important part —that a number of its recommendations and points were directed not at the Government but at other bodies and that I hoped that they would consider them with the same care as the Government.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Leader of the House take on board the fact that, before a general election, there is natural reluctance in the House to debate the mechanics of electoral arrangements? The ideal time to do so is just after a general election. Given the ignorance that the Prime Minister showed today in not appreciating that it is illegal for anyone to demand a charge to sign any document under the Representation of the People Acts, may we have an early debate on access to polling stations, the right to absent voting and all the mechanics and bureaucratic hurdles that are placed before people exercising their right to vote? There is a good deal of disquiet on both sides of the House, and the time to address it is just after a general election, not immediately preceding one.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman makes some interesting points, on which I shall reflect, but at this stage I must give the traditional answer that I cannot promise a debate in the first week back.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): In the week when we return, will my right hon. Friend be able to announce his thinking on the setting up of Select Committees? Is he aware that they are a check on many actions of the Executive, and is it an unworthy thought that the Government are in no hurry to set them up?

Mr. Newton: If, for once, I am allowed to give a straight answer to a straight question, yes, it is an unworthy thought, because my right hon. Friends and I are supporters of the Select Committees and, as I have said many times, I wish to see them set up as soon as it proves practicable to do so. We have set up the Select Committee on Selection. I hope that we shall be able to set up two important scrutiny Committees very shortly—we may table motions today—and to proceed fairly rapidly with the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. I cannot predict progress on the departmental Select Committees, but I reiterate that the shadow Leader of the House and I are anxious to see progress made as soon as possible.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House refer to early-day motion 54, on jobs retention in the textile industry?

[That this House notes with alarm the failure of the Prime Minister to give a categorical assurance to the honourable Member for Bradford South that the United Kingdom textile industry would not be sacrificed in return for concessions for agriculture in the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade negotiations, Official Report, column 496, 12th May; recognises the importance of the textile and clothing industry to the country, employing as it does over 450,000 people with 12,000 jobs directly dependent on textiles in Bradford alone; and demands that the Prime Minister assures the industry that his Government will seek retention of this important industry as an essential part of the GATT negotiations.]

Will he encourage the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement next week? The early-day motion refers to the Prime Minister's failure to guarantee to the House that in negotiations on the general agreement on tariffs and trade the textile industry will not be sacrificed to obtain concessions for agricultural interests. That was a serious omission, because our large and important textile and clothing industry employs almost 450,000 people. In Bradford, 12,000 people are employed directly by the textile industry, so a statement on the GATT negotiations and the Government's determination to preserve the textile industry in this country would be important and welcome.

Mr. Newton: I hoped that I had carried the hon. Gentleman with me in acknowledging that the draft textiles agreement put forward by the GATT director general last December has been seen by the United Kingdom's textile industry as providing a satisfactory basis for a settlement. The importance of a successful conclusion to the negotiations that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has been conducting over many days and nights in Brussels—I cannot be sure what is happening at the moment—is that it might make it easier to achieve a GATT settlement, which we would all welcome.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I add my voice to calls from both sides of the House not only for an early debate but for restitution for those who have been defrauded under the sad Maxwell pension scheme affair. Before we debate the subject, will my right hon. Friend look at early-day motion 109, which is in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley)?

[That this House, noting the powerful Evening Standard full page article, 20th May, recognises that whosoever else may have been responsible for preventing the removal of the pension funds' assets the existing and prospective pensioners were properly depending on others to protect their interests, and demands effective action to restore the pensions and the pension entitlements.]

It refers to the admirable article on the Maxwell pension affair that appeared in the *Evening Standard* yesterday. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that, at an early date, the Attorney-General will explain to the House what progress has been made in bringing to justice those who have defrauded Maxwell pensioners, because it was clearly not just the work of one man who is now dead?

Mr. Newton: I noted the substantial full-page article in yesterday's *Evening Standard*, covering a whole range of matters, and I shall ensure that the attention of the Attorney-General is drawn to what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 107?

[That this House notes the restructuring of BNFL Capenhurst, in particular the new role of URENCO but is concerned that no statement has been made to honourable and Right honourable Members regarding the effects of re-structuring on the Almelo Agreement, the impact on terms and conditions of employment, in particular the refusal of Government to allow the continuation of Civil Service pension arrangements for the workforce and furthermore the failure properly to resource a study designed to protect jobs by diversification following the much welcomed end of the Cold War.]

Will he arrange for an early statement and debate on the subject, which is of enormous importance to employees in my constituency and to Members of the House, who are, I am sure, as concerned as I am about the Government's failure to make a statement on the announcement, given its impact on the arrangements for fuel enrichment?

Mr. Newton: As I understand it, the restructuring of BNFL Capenhurst is a commercial matter for the company. I cannot undertake to initiate a debate about it in the House.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I ask my right hon. Friend for a debate during the week after the recess on early-day motion 32, which calls for Polish nationals to be treated on the same level as nationals of Czechoslovakia and Hungary in the issuing of visas.

[That this House urges Her Majesty's Government to end the visa requirement for Polish nationals wishing to visit

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the United Kingdom, thus establishing the same future entry criteria for Poland as for Hungary, Czechoslovakia and many other countries.]

The House should take account of and discuss the present serious discrimination against Polish nationals.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has no plans at present to lift the requirement, but the Government intend to review the matter again later in the year when the impact on other Community states of having abolished the visa requirement may have become more apparent.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Will the Leader of the House say when the Government propose to introduce the order transferring responsibility for science and technology to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster? Will he bear in mind that it was the Opposition who had to find time for six of the previous eight annual debates on science and technology?

Mr. Newton: In response to the hon. Gentleman's first question, I cannot give him an exact date, but I expect that the order will be introduced next month. On his second point, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that, in view of his new responsibilities, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster now has a 20-minute question slot every three weeks, which will provide an enhanced opportunity for the hon. Gentleman to raise the matters in which he is interested.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Are you, Madam Speaker, aware that, at a well-attended meeting last night your fellow Member for West Bromwich—the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape)—and I were elected joint chairmen of the all-party railways group? Are you further aware that one of the objectives that we have set ourselves is to draw up an all-party response to the White Paper on the future of the railways?

Last week, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House admitted that what happened last Monday—the fact that the White Paper had not been produced before we debated the Bill—was unique. Will the White Paper appear as soon as we return after the Whitsun recess? If not, when shall we see it? May we be assured that it will appear well before the summer recess, and that we shall have a chance to study and debate it before the recess?

Mr. Newton: I had not caught up with the piece of intelligence with which my hon. Friend began his question, but I am sure that the news will have been greeted with unqualified pleasure on both sides of the House. We shall look forward to following his activities in his capacity as joint chairman of the group.

I cannot give my hon. Friend undertakings about precisely when the White Paper will appear, but I resist the suggestion that what I said last week was an admission. It was merely an acknowledgement that I could not think of an example of what my hon. Friend described having happened before.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to look at early-day motion 95?

[That this House notes during the first week of Speaker Lloyd's period in office on the Wednesday 39 Oral questions were taken, on the Thursday over 40, on the Monday over 36 and on the Tuesday 32, under Speaker Thomas on the Wednesday 23 questions, on the Thursday 20, on the Monday over 26 and on the Tuesday 23, under Speaker Weatherill 21 questions were taken on the Monday, 18 on the Tuesday, 18 on the Wednesday and 18 on the Thursday, and during the week starting 11th May, 16 questions were taken on Monday, 20 on Tuesday, 16 on Wednesday and 17 on Thursday; and believes all Members of the House have a duty to keep their questions short and concise, and all Ministers to keep their replies short.]

It suggests that, in the past 20 years, the number of questions for oral answer reached each day has about halved. Will the right hon. Gentleman have an urgent meeting with all the Ministers who will answer questions in the week in which we return from the recess and will he stress that their answers should be short and concise? Will he also stress that answers should be addressed to the Chair and that Ministers should be aware of any requests from the Chair to keep their answers short?

Mr. Newton: Yes.

Madam Speaker: That is a very good question on which to end.

Points of Order

4 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During business questions, the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), who has now left the Chamber, made a typically inaccurate—indeed reckless—comment about the Maxwell pensioners, and about requests by the Opposition for debates and statements. It is a matter of record that not only I but many of my hon. Friends have pressed for debates on the plight of the Maxwell pensioners. Inaccurate allegations such as those made by the hon. Member for Dover have no place in this Chamber, and certainly cannot go unchallenged.

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is a matter for debate and not a point of order for the Chair.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I ask for your help and reassurance on a matter that was raised in the Chamber on Tuesday this week.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) suggested that, during the general election, I violated House of Commons rules by using House of Commons stationery, notepaper and other such items. I was not aware then that he intended to raise a point of order. I have written to him twice since then asking him to produce the relevant document. I understand that he has failed to produce the document to the Serjeant at Arms or to myself. I reassure you, Madam Speaker, and the House that, as far as I am aware, no House of Commons stationery, envelopes or other items here were used by me or my staff during the general election campaign.

Madam Speaker: I allowed the hon. Lady to make her point in this way as there is a delay in the inquiry for which I asked when the original point of order was raised. I expect a report from the Serjeant at Arms in, I hope, the very near future.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I gave you notice of this point of order earlier today. It concerns my constituent, Mr. Chazanfer Ali, whose plight is described in early-day motion 113. He is a Pakistani national who has lived in Britain for the past 18 years and he is now in prison in Pakistan. Unfortunately, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office said that it could not make any inquiries on his behalf, including inquiries on when he is likely to be released and can thus rejoin his wife and family in Bradford, on the ground that he is a Pakistani national.

I wonder whether you, Madam Speaker, would consider—I stress the word "consider"—making an approach on an entirely informal and personal basis, possibly through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, to the Speaker of the Pakistan National Assembly to make inquiries about why Mr. Ali is being held, whether he has been tried for any offence and, most important of all, when he is likely to be released so that he can rejoin his wife and family in this country.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's raising the matter on the Floor of the House is hardly an informal or personal approach. The Chair should not be involved in such matters. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will continue to pursue his inquiries, but he must now do so through other channels.

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will have read in column 257 of yesterday's *Hansard* that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) was accused by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) of strolling in here and asking a question five minutes before the end of Question Time. You will remember that the Benches were especially full with prayer cards yesterday. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes sat next to me for some time—at least 20 minutes—before returning to his place and catching your eye.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. In response to that point of order, reported in yesterday's *Hansard* at column 258, you said that you took a very dim view of Members who come in at Question Time, catch your eye after a short time—perhaps as much as 20 minutes—and then leave. I seek your guidance on this because, when I am here for an hour during Scottish questions, I am always barracked when I ask a question, which shows that the Opposition do not want questions to be asked. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) specifically came to ask a question about fishing and he managed to catch your eye. The question was relevant to his constituents because a quota given to Scottish fishermen can be used off the waters of Lewes. Should Members be able to come into the House just to ask a particular question and stay only for that question?

Madam Speaker: I am not in the business of dealing with points of order retrospectively. It is absolutely right that hon. Members should show an interest in the subjects that arise in Question Time and should be here for a little while before their question and for some time after it. That is a matter of courtesy to the Chair, the House and other right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Paul Tyler (Cornwall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. What is your attitude to a ministerial statement on Friday, in the light of the latest news from Brussels that an accord has been reached? Do you intend to allow a statement to be made on that tomorrow?

Madam Speaker: Let me try to help the hon. Gentleman. The Speaker does not initiate ministerial statements. The Government tell the Speaker when they want to make a statement. Once that is known, the Speaker is at the disposal of the House to hear the statement. That is our procedure.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on amendment to Question [20 May] That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Which amendment was: to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which keeps the United Kingdom outside the scope of the Protocol on Social Policy, thereby excludes the United Kingdom from the Social Chapter and prevents the people of the United Kingdom from being part of the full social dimension of the European Community to which its eleven partners have agreed in order to facilitate greater protection for employed people in their working conditions, better rights of consultation and information, equality of treatment and opportunities for men and women and the integration into the labour force of long term unemployed people, including disabled workers, deeply regrets the Government's failure to make any attempt to build into the Maastricht Treaty convergence criteria which emphasise the need for balanced development, a high level of employment and sustainable growth in the regions and countries of the Community; deplores the fact that the opt-out provisions of the Treaty on the approach to Monetary Union would mean that neither the European Monetary Institute nor the proposed European Central Bank are likely to be located in Britain; and regrets the fact that the Bill does not include provisions to strengthen co-operation between the sovereign nations of the Community, within a structure of subsidiarity, to enhance political, social, environmental, economic and technological progress throughout Europe and in the developing countries, or to ensure the maximum of democratic accountability of current and future Community institutions to national parliaments and to the European Parliament."

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

[Relevant documents:

Treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act (Cm 455)

Treaty on European Union (Cm 1934)

Fifteenth Report from the Select Committee on European Legislation (House of Commons Paper No. 24-xv of Session 1991-92)

Second Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 223 of Session 1991-92) on Europe after Maastricht and Observations by the Government on the Report (Cm 1965)

Third Report from the Health Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 180 of Session 1991-92) on the European Community and Health Policy

Minutes of Evidence taken before the Home Affairs Committee on 5th, 12th and 26th February 1992 (House of Commons Paper No. 215 of Session 1991-92) on Migration Control at the External Borders of the European Community

Minutes of Evidence taken before the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on 19th February 1992 (House of Commons Paper No. 285 of Session 1991-92) on Economic and Monetary Union

Fourth Special Report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 334 of Session 1991-92) on European Community Finances

The White Paper on Developments in the European Community, July-December 1991 (Cm 1857)

The White Paper on Developments in the European Community, January-June 1991 (Cm 1657).]

Madam Speaker: I must inform the House that there are still a great number of right hon. and hon. Members wishing to speak and that I have therefore had to place a time limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm. I would appreciate it if those speaking before and after those times would limit their speeches accordingly.

4.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): This is the third time that the essential European question has been debated in this Chamber since last November. As the debate moves on, so does the world. The facts of Europe were very different when these debates began more than 20 years ago. There has been a huge increase in the proportion of our trade carried on with our fellow members of the Community; and a huge increase in the number of journeys made by our citizens inside the Community—22 million such journeys last year.

Our companies are increasingly organised to treat the Community as a single market. One thinks of a company such as Airbus Industrie, with its 20 per cent. British share, which was made possible by the Community. It is now the world's second largest manufacturer of civil aircraft.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Airbus Industrie was competent and active during the 1970s, and the Labour Government were responsible for getting the company to agree to manufacture the wing of the airbus in this country. With all his resources, the right hon. Gentleman ought to be a great deal better briefed.

Mr. Hurd: But we were in the Community in the 1970s. I had forgotton that the right hon. Gentleman was briefly in charge of these arrangements during one of the periods of his European journey, when he was, I think, in favour of our membership of the Community. I stand by what I have said.

These are just a few of the facts of Europe, created mostly not by Ministers or Members of this House but by our constituents. These facts grow daily stronger around us as we negotiate and debate, and they help to account for the magnetic effect of the Community on its neighbours to the north, the south and the east. The proof of that is the lengthening queue of applicants. There are six applications for full membership on the table already, and others will surely follow. These applications are not for membership of some vague future confederation but for membership of the existing Community, with all its failings.

Alongside these facts runs the debate—our debate and that in other countries—about the future of the Community. The Community proceeds by debate, by argument, by negotiation and, we hope, by agreement. We argue because we hope to agree. In democracies, argument is not a disaster or a crisis but a necessary prelude to agreement. Usually, although not always, after we have argued in Europe we agree. That has been true under all three of the Conservative Prime Ministers for whom I have worked on European matters.

This agreement, this Maastricht treaty which we are asking the House to ratify through this Bill, is the product of the same process—18 months of hard and often

argumentative negotiation. In the end we have an agreement—this is our case—that is good for Britain and for Europe.

From the speeches yesterday, it is clear that the worry of the doubters on both sides of the House is partly about the treaty itself, but perhaps even more about what might lie ahead. The worry is that Maastricht, like other agreements, will lead us relentlessly to a centralised Europe, in which eventually there will be a single executive holding all worthwhile power, and a single Parliament, with national Parliaments being steadily stripped of substance. Some newspapers have reported a Commission plan to move in this direction without delay. Therefore, it is worth pausing for a moment on this question of the institutions of the Community and its enlargement.

At Maastricht, the European Council, the summit, asked the Commission to write a report on the enlargement of the Community. The Commission met last week to discuss for the first time what that paper might contain. It knows our view, which is widely shared. It is that Sweden, Austria and Finland should be welcomed soon. It is conceivable that one or two others might join at that time—Norway, for example, and, which is becoming more likely, Switzerland. In 1992—that is, during our presidency—we would aim for a mandate prepared by the Commission for negotiations with these countries. In 1993, there would be negotiations, and in 1994 ratification. This first wave would enter the Community in 1995.

The press reports that I mentioned suggested that the Commission would use this opportunity to reopen the Maastricht agreement—the agreement that we are asking the House to ratify—arguing that any enlargement of the Community needed the more centralised institutions, including the stronger executive Commission, that were argued for but not agreed at Maastricht. We have warned against this approach. As my predecessor Ernest Bevin said of something else, if we open this Pandora's box, we will find it full of Trojan horses. We believe that this first wave of new entrants can be accommodated without reopening the main Maastricht discussion before 1996. I hope and believe that this view is increasingly accepted.

As the House knows and welcomes, other new entrants will come later, but not, we hope, much later. We must give a constructive reply to Malta, Cyprus and Turkey. Thinking especially of Turkey, our links should be much stronger than those that exist today. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, we want Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland to join the Community by the end of the century at the latest.

In 1996, as was agreed by Maastricht, there will be a fresh review of institutions. The House will have noticed that, at Maastricht, we successfully held off any attempt to prejudice that review, or any prejudicial prescription of it. Nothing in Maastricht, either in the review clause or in the treaty, dictates the next step.

On the one hand, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out, Maastricht provides for some wider definition of competence and some extension of qualified majority voting but, on the other hand, the treaty establishes in treaty the worth of intergovernmental co-operation on foreign and security policy and on home affairs. That is to say that the Maastricht treaty recognised that these things do not need to be done centrally, with a common line dictated at the centre and going right across the board. The principle of subsidiarity is likewise established by treaty.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South) *rose*——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I am coming to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). First I shall give way to the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall).

Mr. Hall: Article 198a in the original treaty of Maastricht sets up a Committee of the Regions to provide a forum for consultation between local authorities in Europe, the Commission and the Council of Europe. I understand that, subsequent to the original article being signed, the wording has been changed to remove local authority representation. Will the Foreign Secretary make a statement on that issue?

Mr. Hurd: The clause does not specify that those concerned need to be representatives of local authorities. It goes wider than that. The Committee of the Regions will be established—the clause is there—and we, the Government, are now considering how that should be done in United Kingdom terms. Obviously policy needs to be made and an announcement made, but it is a matter for the Government to settle in accordance with the treaty.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I have nothing more to say on that point. I know that, if I start to give way on this subject, I shall have to give way to several representatives of constituencies in different parts of the Kingdom. These interventions started yesterday. This is a legitimate forum and a place for argument but not, I think, on Second Reading.

I shall illustrate the point that I am making about centralising and non-centralising tendencies by saying something a bit more specific about foreign policy and the way that it is made. As the House knows, an enormous amount of foreign policy business is now done among and between the Twelve. We aim to reach agreement and to act together when we can, not because there is a legal obligation to do so but because it usually makes sense to try.

I shall give the House an example. Faced with the confusion and rapid change that we now see in central and eastern Europe, the traditional response of the west European powers 100 years ago would have been to pick sides, choose clients and deepen trouble by transferring their own rivalries to the new scene. That process went on and reached its climax, which was the great war. It arose out of a shooting in Sarajevo.

By contrast, when the Soviet Union was breaking up last year, we discussed in the Twelve how we should act. We agreed to recognise the emerging republics together, and together we accepted Russia as the successor state in the Security Council of the United Nations. They were all difficult problems. What could have taken months of discord was quietly and amicably settled.

I readily acknowledge that it does not always work as well as that. This process among the Twelve depends on agreement by all, and it is therefore sometimes slow and frustrating. Sometimes member states have to decide, and are free to decide, whether to compromise or to go off on their own.

Yugoslavia is an example, and it was often mentioned during the debate yesterday. Once, last summer, we had said a goodbye—a sad goodbye in my view—to the hope that there might still be a Yugoslavia by consent, it was

[Mr. Hurd]

clear that in principle the republics of the former Yugoslavia would become independent. As I said last autumn, the argument from then on was about timing, not principle. Germany recognised Slovenia and Croatia later. Britain and France recognised them earlier than each of us would have preferred. I think it was right, however, to compromise on timing rather than split, take sides and further aggravate the trouble in Yugoslavia.

Listening to the news, reading the news and reading the reports that I receive, my worry now about Yugoslavia is not about who recognised whom and when but about how we can help to bring the tragedy to an end. No country is willing to send in its troops to impose a settlement by force. So we have to keep alive the peacemaking efforts, we have to pile up the pressure on those, particularly the Serbs and the JNA, the national army, who at the moment are mainly responsible for violence, and we have to bind up the wounds with help for the casualties and the refugees.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does not the illustration that my right hon. Friend has just given add force to his earlier comment about the real need for some practical deadline for the admission of countries from central and eastern Europe? In the case of the Czech and Slovak Republic, is there not a worry that, unless there is some firm time in our minds, the problems that my right hon. Friend outlined could, sadly, spread in that direction?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. Under a British initiative, we now have association agreements with Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. During our presidency, I propose to invite all three to a political meeting so that they feel that it is not just a matter of trade concessions, but that from now on they are part of the discussions and they can talk frankly to us about the issues on their minds, even before they are full members. It is for them to decide when to apply for membership, but of course that involves certain obligations that they will take time to meet. We have set a target, and we do not mean to stand still and do nothing in the meanwhile.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): The question of frontiers must be fundamental to the EC and its individual member states. Should frontier control be a national responsibility or an EC responsibility as a result of the treaty?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister dealt with that point when he opened the debate yesterday, and it also arose later. It relates to article 8a of the Single European Act, not of the Bill or the treaty. My right hon. Friend clearly set out why and in what way we intend to argue fiercely, and I believe successfully, on both legal and common-sense grounds for our ability to maintain our arrangements.

I want to return to the argument about the formulation of foreign policy. The centralists argue that the discussions on its substance should be cut short, because they are sometimes slow and frustrating, and the matter resolved by majority voting. I spent much of last year disagreeing with that argument. Currently the EC is discussing Macedonia, one of the republics of the former Yugoslavia, and there are strong feelings in one member state about that.

I am sure that it would be a mistake at the present time to try to ram through by majority voting the recognition of Macedonia, under its present name, against the passionate opposition of Greece. The principle must be one of agreeing and acting together if we can—and if not, member states are free to act separately. That is the principle on which we operate today and the principle that my right hon. Friend preserved at Maastricht.

The CFSP chapter of the treaty is about member states taking decisions by unanimity. There is strictly limited provision for qualified majority voting, tightly defined, over which every member state has a veto. For a decision on implementation to be taken by QMV, all the member states have to agree to that procedure. The principle of unanimity is preserved and will certainly be used on all important decisions.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): It is interesting that, when referring to the recognition of Macedonia, the right hon. Gentleman regards the attitude of the Greek Government as reasonable and not to be overridden by a majority. The Greeks are objecting to what they see as a possible territorial claim by Macedonia. Would it not be appropriate for the Secretary of State to apply a similar approach to the Irish Republic?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has discussed with me and other Ministers articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, which have been in place for a long time. They are open to argument and controversy, something in which the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends take the lead. I do not think that even his argument would be advanced if I were to act in the way that he suggests.

Nothing in the CFSP stops us acting independently. Indeed, there may well be occasions on which we or other member states feel strongly or need to act quickly, and we can decide to take independent action should we wish to do so. Anyone questioning that should study article J.3.6 of the treaty. Our position on the Security Council is reinforced and that was a satisfactory arrangement that we worked out, particularly with the French. I think that the balance of it is right.

The European Court of Justice came up often during the debate of the past 24 hours, and I should like to deal with that frankly. There is no doubt that, during the past 35 years, the treaties on which the court operated have set out an integrationist approach, and the court's decisions have reflected that. Arguments put by my right hon. and hon. Friends yesterday, which have been reflected in many speeches in the House, suggest that the thrust of the Maastricht treaty is different because of the test of subsidiarity and the rejection over a wide area of the centralising principle.

For example, in the new treaty, we have expressly excluded the Community from taking "harmonising measures" in the new articles on culture, health and education. In the past, that drive towards harmonising legislation has caused many problems, with the Community, and the Commission in particular, trying to inveigle their way into the nooks and crannies of national life.

Now the Community's objectives have been more clearly circumscribed. We have article 3b on subsidiarity. That covers all areas of Community policy and, when the treaty is ratified, it will form a backcloth against which the

court will have to make its judgments, particularly in those areas where there is a challenge to the Community taking action at all.

Yesterday, not for the first time, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) went over that ground in some detail. He is right to say that the only definition of subsidiarity that matters is the one in the treaty. But he is wrong to claim that, in areas of exclusive Community competence, subsidiarity, whatever its principle and whatever its definition, does not apply.

If the hon. Gentleman looks at the final sentence of article 3b, he will see that it says that:

"Any action by the Community"

is covered by the principle. We had a good deal of discussion about that at Maastricht. I am glad that we managed to achieve what we did, and I am drawing it to the hon. Gentleman's attention, because he is always fair-minded.

Over-regulation is now under attack both in the areas where it is accepted that the Community has a role and in those many areas where the Community and member states both have a role to play. Of course, we must test it in practice. Article 3b is a beginning; it is a definition in the treaty. However, the House should not underestimate the importance of the change.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): We all agree that this is an important matter, and I thank the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), for what he said earlier this morning. Will the Foreign Secretary review what he has just said? Surely there is no definition of subsidiarity in article 3b, only a reference to the principle, whatever that be. The last sentence to which he has just referred, which I shall not quote because it appears in yesterday's copy of *Hansard*, and to which the Minister of State referred in the early hours of this morning, talks about what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the treaty. That surely is not coterminous with subsidiarity, because "necessity" and "subsidiarity" are two different words with the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in whatever context it is brought to their attention.

Mr. Hurd: Those hon. Members who wish to pursue the argument will have to read article 3b in the quiet of their studies and offices and make a judgment about whether that is important. The article certainly contains a definition of subsidiarity. It says:

"the Community shall take action . . . only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States"—

and so on. That is a definition of subsidiarity.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way, because I am most interested in the consideration of the difference between subsidiarity and centralisation. I am concerned about article 99, which states that there shall be

"harmonisation of legislation concerning turnover taxes, excise duties and other forms of indirect taxation".

That important matter is of great concern to the House. The whole history of the House and of Parliament has to do with who levies taxes on the people and spends that money. Is it conceded that that will now be controlled from the centre, or can my right hon. Friend give an assurance that it will be put back under the articles of subsidiarity?

Mr. Hurd: The article to which my hon. Friend refers does not contain any change of substance compared with the Single European Act. The principle of unanimity remains. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has heard my hon. Friend's remarks, and he may reply to them more fully when he winds up.

It is clear that we are not just talking about an article in the treaty that has no back-up. The Commission is taking the concept of subsidiarity seriously. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister quoted it yesterday. The President of the EC Commission in particular is on the record in that respect. On French television last weekend, he was asked whether the Commission would propose ceding a number of competences that are now Community competences back to member states. He said:

"I will do it next year, if I am there. Or it will be in my will and testament if I leave."

He cited the example of the environment, and said:

"I am in the process of preparing all this. It's what is called a more rigorous application of the principle of subsidiarity."

That was said by the President of the EC Commission before the treaty has any effect. I am making the point that that is now in the debate and is increasingly accepted as a principle. It is now in the treaty, and I hope that means that over-regulation is going out on the ebb tide.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend says that the European institutions are imbued with the spirit of subsidiarity. If that is the case, why are they seeking to enforce a 48-hour working week on the United Kingdom? Under the Single European Act, we thought that question would be decided by unanimity. Why does not the Community row back on that?

Mr. Hurd: I am saying that there is in the new treaty, which is not yet in force, an article of subsidiarity that is important. I am saying that the President of the EC Commission and other people are increasingly referring to that as a guiding principle, even before it is in effect. They have a long way to go before it is in effect.

As to the 48-hour week, my hon. Friend knows the position. Quite apart from the merits of that proposal, which is bad from the point of view of this country and of Europe, the article on which it is based, from the Single European Act, is inadequate.

The structure of the Maastricht treaty will affect European Court of Justice activity. Although there have been some comments outside the House to the contrary, the pillars—by which I mean foreign policy, justice and home matters—are excluded from the court's jurisdiction. It has no say in those matters. Article L of the treaty is clear about that. The only exception is if member states choose, in any given convention, to ask the court to be the arbiter. That would be a sovereign decision reached by all 12 member states for any given convention.

The Community is an evolving structure. At each step, there is a new framework within which the existing treaty language is to be interpreted.

The European Parliament plays an important part in reinforcing the efforts of national Parliaments and contributing to filling any democratic deficit. We supported changes in Maastricht to give the directly elected European Parliament more control over the Commission and the scrutiny of the Community's finances. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spelled out those details.

[Mr. Hurd]

There were also modest changes that will give the European Parliament a blocking power over certain Community legislation, but with the last say on content being reserved for the Council of Ministers. The European Parliament will not have the power to initiate legislation or to impose laws on member states.

The treaty of Maastricht reinforces the position of national Parliaments, which, as far as I am aware, is a new development in the history of European treaties. It does that in two ways. First, it uses the structure of pillars, limiting the areas of Community legislation and therefore leaving the national Parliaments in charge of the intergovernmental pillars of policy. Secondly, the two declarations made at Maastricht expressly encourage greater involvement of national Parliaments.

It is not for Governments to say how Parliaments are to pursue those opportunities, because each of the 12 Parliaments is sovereign. I hope, however, that the House will continue to give a lead in this regard, not least during our presidency. I note, for example, that in the ratification debate in Paris, the French Assembly secured commitments from the French Government to more rigorous scrutiny arrangements, along the lines of those that we have here.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Under economic and monetary union, what subsidiarity would there be in monetary policy?

Mr. Hurd: I think that I will leave that to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has conducted those parts of the negotiations. Let me say something that my right hon. Friend cannot say, however. It was a remarkable achievement for him, and our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, to preserve an absolute freedom to take a full part in the preparation of this project, while reserving for this country the right to decide whether to join stage 3. Uusually one or the other is obtained; to obtain both the freedom to decide at the right time and the right to take a full part in preparation was, as I have said, a remarkable achievement.

Let me say a few words about defence, which has come up quite often in discussion and is in the newspapers today. It is important to be clear about the position. At Maastricht, we reaffirmed the principle that European activity in defence should complement the common defence that we have through NATO. NATO is, and will remain—as Chancellor Kohl has said—the anchor of European security.

At the same time, however—this has been clear in the debate and, indeed, for some years now—the Europeans need to shoulder a greater share of the burden of providing their own security, while keeping the critical link between the transatlantic and the European dimensions of our defence. That is why we agreed at Maastricht to make the Western European Union, with its close treaty link to NATO, the vehicle for developing a genuine European military capability to act in areas where NATO is not engaged or chooses not to be.

In a speech made in London last week, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence set out our practical British proposals—which have been widely endorsed by our allies and partners—for giving the WEU that capability and building on what is in the Maastricht treaty, by enabling the WEU to call on a wide range of national or NATO-assigned forces to suit the tasks in hand. NATO would have a prior claim on such forces in any NATO contingencies, but making them available for possible use by the WEU would avoid the need for elaborate separate structures, and is a flexible and realistic way of generating that defence capacity.

As my right hon. and learned Friend said, the forces available to the WEU under those arrangements might include the United Kingdom/Netherlands amphibious force, the new NATO air mobile division and, of course, the Franco-German corps, which is now being discussed at the Franco-German summit. That, we think, would be one of the forces at the disposal of the WEU; we do not think that it makes sense to put all European eggs into a Franco-German basket. We hope that, as the discussion continues, proposals on the lines that we have suggested —our suggestions have been widely welcomed by allies and partners—will be adopted by the WEU Ministers when they meet on 19 June.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Germans—against whom the British fought in two world wars, laying down many lives—are now setting up a super-force to trample all over Europe, and to use their power in a way they have already used it when annexing East Germany. What steps will the Foreign Secretary and the Tory Government take to ensure that the Germans do not arm themselves to the teeth once again?

Mr. Hurd: By continuing and strengthening the membership of NATO, which the hon. Gentleman has consistently opposed, and by continuing the process that he will see in the treaty and the co-operation with Germany and with others on foreign and security policies. That is the right way. It has worked. Even the hon. Gentleman, with his deeply old-fashioned views, will eventually come to realise—or the next generation will come to realise—that that is the way to solve what he and some others still regard as the German problem.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Perhaps I might raise a slightly different point, which I hope will be more helpful to the House than the last one. The relationship between the Western European Union and NATO, as outlined last week in the speech by the Secretary of State for Defence, is a welcome advance by the Government, although it has been long awaited. It deals exclusively, however, with defence in terms of the military proper and military organisations proper. The complex composition of Europe is a much wider matter and has to be dealt with as a security problem rather than just as a defence problem. What was missing from the Secretary of State's speech was the relationship not only between WEU and NATO but between those two organisations and the conference on security and co-operation in Europe. Can the Foreign Secretary say a word about that?

Mr. Hurd: The trouble is that not just a word is needed but a speech. The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right; it is a huge subject. The countries of central and eastern Europe are anxious about their security. They have the CSCE—a large organisation with more than 50 members—but what they do not yet have is a vision and a plan by means of which they could plug into the resources and the will of the organisations of the West, whether that be the European Community, NATO, or the Council of Europe. That is

what I hope we can begin to thrash out in a more orderly way than we have done so far at the Helsinki CSCE summit in June. It is a big and important subject, but I do not intend to go any further down that path now, important though it is.

The Maastricht treaty emerged from long, exhaustive negotiations. In a large number of areas—subsidiarity, the rule of law, financial accountability and defence—it reflects our initiatives. It was seen as a success for this country among the press and politicians on the continent. Against that background, a failure to ratify the treaty would be incomprehensible to our partners. It would be a savage blow at the authority of the Government and of the Prime Minister—that is obvious—just at a time when we are particularly well placed to make good use of that authority.

The issues addressed at Maastricht will not go away. In any attempted renegotiations, our position would be diminished, not strengthened. Many of our recent gains would be at risk. Enlargement of the European Community, settlement of the financial issues, reform of the farm policy, now looking brighter—all these prospects would wither. Europe would lapse into months, and I would guess years, of bad-tempered impotence and confusion.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) rightly said, Europe is entering a new phase in its history with the collapse of communism. The old, certain dangers with which we lived in this House for so many years are gone. New uncertainties have replaced them. Therefore, the Community, like the other institutions that I listed in answer to the question put to me by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), needs to evolve, especially to meet the challenge of enlargement.

However, the changes do not cast doubt on the fundamental achievements of the Community, or argue for an unpicking of its essential fabric. Maastricht was an important step away from an increasingly centralised, and therefore arthritic, Community towards a new Europe in which Britain has a central place. The day when, last autumn, the negotiators rejected the Dutch draft of the political union treaty, which would have centralised all co-operation between member states in the Community institutions, turned out to have been a watershed.

We have before us an opportunity to take a lead and to promote a clear, coherent view in the period running up to the next intergovernmental conference in 1996, the next time that there is to be a review of the institutions. The ball is at our feet. We have a treaty that more closely—I do not say completely—mirrors British priorities than any of its predecessors. We have a new Government with a firm mandate for a positive but distinctive approach to the Community. We are shortly to take over the six-months presidency of the Community. The Government therefore hope that the House will endorse the treaty and the Bill.

On that foundation, but only on that foundation, this Government, this House and thinking people throughout the country can do what is necessary. We can prepare our minds and our proposals for an enlarged Community of 20 or more members by the end of the decade—a Community that cannot be tightly centralised on those lines but that can and must work together on those matters where Europe must work together, if it is to be effective.

In its most recent report to this House, the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs said:

"The European union will be a wholly new institution, a unique structure with no equivalents elsewhere in the world." We are building something unique. There are no blueprints. There are no precedents. We are building not a superstate but a Community of member states, upholding diversity and serving rather than dominating its citizens. We now in Britain, at this moment, by good luck and perhaps, along the way, a little good management, have an opportunity to set that course, beginning with a vote for the Bill tonight.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), may I gently remind Members that many hon. Members have said that they wish to speak in the debate? Those who intervene must stifle the impulse to make full-blown speeches.

4.46 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): As the Foreign Secretary pointed out in his last words to the House, the Bill enacts the Maastricht treaty and its protocols into United Kingdom law. Therefore it is to be judged on that basis, but not on that basis alone. The Bill and the treaty must also be judged on the kind of Europe that they will help to produce, and on the kind of Britain that they will help to bring about.

The treaty contains many provisions that the Labour party has advocated for a number of years—in the policy reviews approved by our party conference and in policy statements approved by the Labour party's national executive committee. Some of those provisions have also been advocated by the Government.

For example, there is common ground between the Government and ourselves about the need for subsidiarity, as provided for in article 63b of the treaty. Both parties have advocated interparliamentary contacts. Those appear in the treaty, in the declaration on the conference of the parliaments. Both the Labour party and the Conservative party have called for common foreign and security policies, though without qualified majority voting. Here, too, such policies are provided for in title V of the treaty. However, in its official policy statements, the Labour party has advocated further measures that are to be found in the treaty but that have not been put forward actively by this Conservative Government.

For example, the Labour party has called for an enhanced role for the regions. The Conservatives have been silent on that matter. However, we are very pleased to see, in article 198 of the treaty, that provision is made for a Committee of the Regions. I hope that in Committee the way in which that Committee is to be appointed will be clarified in order to alleviate the misgivings of the local authority associations.

The Labour party called for enhanced voting rights for the citizens of Community countries in local elections and in European Parliament elections. Such voting rights have not been noted as Conservative party policy. Still, they appear in article 68b of the treaty and we welcome them. If, however, there are policies in the treaty that the Labour party has advocated, with Conservative party concurrence, and if there are policies in the treaty that the Labour party has advocated but on which the Conservative party has been silent, there are even more policies in the treaty

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

that the Labour party has actively advocated and that the Conservative party and the Government have actively opposed.

The Labour party has advocated a whole series of new competences for the Community on education, on health, on culture and on various other matters. Eleven months ago, in one of the debates in the House on the Community, the Foreign Secretary declared very clearly and firmly that the Government were against new Community competences. Yet such competences, proposed by the Labour party and opposed by the Conservative party, appear in the treaty and we welcome their presence in the treaty.

Again, the Labour party proposed qualified majority voting in a ministerial council on social and environmental matters. We proposed that some years ago and repeated our advocacy of it on many occasions. When addressing the Confederation of British Industry, the Foreign Secretary said that he opposed what he called

"significantly extended qualified majority voting."

The Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) is not here, but that is understandable in view of the many hours he put in during this long debate, although my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who is doubly or triply conscientious, is here.

The Minister of State, who is not here—we shall not complain about that—nevertheless told the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs that he was opposed specifically to qualified majority voting on the environment. That was the Government's policy. Yet not only does article 130s of the treaty provide for qualified majority voting on the environment, but the treaty contains no fewer than 61 references to qualified majority voting even though the Foreign Secretary said that he was against any

"significantly extended qualified majority voting".

The Labour party has attached great importance to extended regional policies within the Community. The Conservative party opposed such policies, yet there they are, in article 63 of the treaty. The Labour party proposed a greater role for the European Parliament and the Government opposed greater powers for the European Parliament, yet enhanced powers for the Parliament are contained in the treaty.

One of the specific proposals that we made in order to bridge what has been referred to in Euro-jargon as the "democratic deficit" was a system of confirmation of the Commission by the European Parliament. Because the Government were opposed to extended powers for the Parliament, they were opposed to a parliamentary confirmation procedure for the Commission, yet in article 10 of title III, the treaty provides a process of confirmation for the Commission. The Government opposed it but it is there, and we strongly welcome its presence in the treaty.

The Labour party also proposed co-decision powers between the Parliament and the Council of Ministers. The Government opposed co-decision powers yet they are to be found in article 189b of the treaty. We in the Labour party strongly welcome their presence. We proposed a blocking power for the European Parliament. In his speech today, the Foreign Secretary implied somehow that the Government had readily supported the insertion of a blocking power at the Maastricht conference, but on 20 November last year, during the debate in the House before Maastricht, the Prime Minister insisted that any blocking power for the Parliament

"must cover a far narrower range than that set out in the present Presidency text."—[*Official Report*, 20 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 279.]

However, at Maastricht the Prime Minister agreed to the specific words that he had opposed and rejected in the House before Maastricht. The Bill asks the House to confirm a treaty that contains the very words that the Prime Minister rejected. The Prime Minister yesterday moved the Second Reading of a Bill that will bring into United Kingdom statute law words that he said he did not want in United Kingdom statute law. The Foreign Secretary seemed to imagine that that was one of the many successes that the Government had gained at Maastricht. Certainly the Labour party regards it as a success, because we wanted those words in the treaty. We are pleased to see them there, but the Government did not want them there.

Not only does the treaty contain provisions that the Labour party and the Conservative party have jointly advocated and not only does it contain provisions that the Labour party has advocated and the Conservative party has not, but it contains even more provisions that the Labour party has advocated and the Conservative party has actively opposed. In fact, the treaty can in some respects be said to contain more Labour party policy than Conservative party policy.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): It is very interesting to hear that the Government have effected Labour party policy in so many matters and that the treaty is obviously the result of it having converted the Government. Why, then, is the right hon. Gentleman advising his party to vote against the Bill when the Government have clearly been so successful in accomplishing so many of the Labour party's objectives?

Mr. Kaufman: First, I am not advising my party to vote against the Bill. Secondly, I shall outline in some detail the reasons why, despite the fact that there are so many things in the treaty which I support and despite the fact that there are so many things in the treaty which I support and against which the Government for months set their face, I nevertheless cannot vote for Second Reading. I shall explain with, I hope, some clarity.

The Labour party especially welcomes the presence in the treaty of provision for Community decisions to be open to far greater scrutiny and accountability, for qualified majority voting on environmental and social issues, for specified inceased powers for the European Parliament—especially in exercising control over the Commission—for the strengthening of interparliamentary contacts, for stronger regional co-operation, for improved political rights of citizenship and for the development of European political and security co-operation.

If those matters covered the full extent of the Bill, I could cheerfully vote for Second Reading tonight. Indeed, I could vote for it a good deal more cheerfully than could the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, both of whom have spent much of their time vainly attempting to keep out of the treaty provisions that are now contained in it and which will be incorporated in United Kingdom law when the Bill becomes an Act of Parliament.

However—I now respond directly to the intervention of the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd)

—the matters to which I referred do not cover the full extent of the Bill. There is also, for example, the presence in article J.4 of title V provision for what the treaty calls

"the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence."

The Foreign Secretary did his best today to explain exactly what that meant, although neither he nor anyone else has responded to the trenchant and pertinent questions put to the Government by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) who spoke in the debate on the Address and highlighted profound inconsistencies between the treaty and what the Government claim to be their interpretation of a common defence.

Let us consider for a moment what the Government have done. I make it clear—this will clarify our position in response to the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills—that we in the Labour party have firmly opposed a defence role for the Community, and we continue to oppose such a role. We believe that western defence should be left to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and we thought that the Conservative party shared our view. After all, in June the Foreign Secretary insisted:

"Defence should not be embraced by the European Community."— *[Official Report,* 26 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. 1011.]

I agreed with those words. However, today the Foreign Secretary has commended to the House a treaty which will bring about the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might lead in time to common defence. That same Foreign Secretary now asks the House to vote for a Bill which provides for defence to be embraced by the European Community. The right hon. Gentleman and his party may feel able to vote for what they so recently opposed, but I cannot and will not vote for that. That is why I shall not vote in favour of Second Reading.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I have been listening intently to my right hon. Friend's argument. His objection is to the Government's policy, not to the treaty. If a Labour Government were in power, it would be open to them to use the Bill to achieve everything they want: to opt into the social chapter and the single currency and to keep out of the defence arrangement. My right hon. Friend is therefore objecting to the Government's policy and not to the Bill. The logic of his argument is that he should invite his hon. Friends to vote for Second Reading.

Mr. Kaufman: My right hon. Friend has simply not been listening. Of course we are debating policy—any Bill is enveloped in policy—but this Bill represents the enactment of a treaty. That treaty includes many policies which are official Labour party policy. My right hon. Friend and one other hon. Friend on our national executive committee opposed that policy, but it was supported by the rest of that committee. Despite such opposition, the Labour party conference decided that that policy should be official party policy, and it did so without any vote being taken.

I am trying to explain why it is right that those many items of official Labour party policy, confirmed by the annual conference and the national executive committee and contained in the treaty should become the law of this country. I shall also explain that, because there are certain things in the treaty which I oppose and others that are not in the treaty, which should be included, I cannot vote for the Bill. My right hon. Friend is entitled to his egregious position on Labour party policy, but it is my job to expound the official policy of the party to whose parliamentary committee I am elected.

Mr. Hurd: I do not wish to intervene on fraternal strife, but I must point out that, if the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) had had his way, there would have been no official Labour party policy on the treaty of Maastricht and no negotiation. Britain would not have been a member of the Community and we would have been watching these matters from the outside. This is the sixth official Labour party policy with which the right hon. Gentleman has been stalwartly associated.

Mr. Kaufman: If the right hon. Gentleman had had his way, part of the treaty—on which he has imposed a three-line Whip—would not have been brought before the House because he, the Prime Minister, the Minister of State and others have said over and over again that it is wrong, that they oppose it, that it should not appear, and that it is a disgrace. He is now saying that, because he has changed his mind in six months, it is wrong for others to change theirs in 10 years. That is a curious approach.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I shall give way, but in view of your strictures, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall then proceed.

Mr. Moate: If the only thing to which the right hon. Gentleman takes exception in the treaty is the reference to common defence, why is that not mentioned anywhere in the Opposition amendment?

Mr. Kaufman: If various friendly and constructive interventions had not delayed me, I should now be moving on to other items. If the hon. Gentleman will permit me, I will now proceed to name some which appear in our reasoned amendment.

The Bill opts the United Kingdom out of the third stage of the process to economic and monetary union. Yesterday, the Prime Minister boasted that, if Parliament so decides under clause 2 of the Bill, the United Kingdom could opt back into the third stage of EMU. Clause 2 is purely cosmetic because the Government could, if they wanted, introduce a further Bill next week to repeal that clause. It is not entrenched and there are no such entrenched clauses in British legislation.

At the same time, that cosmetic principle is quite pointless, because the House is being asked to vote for a treaty protocol, which, as the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate), who studies these matters, will know, is part of the treaty document. The protocol lays down irrevocably—that is the word—that the third stage of economic and monetary union, with the central bank and the single currency, will start on 1 January 1999.

Let us be clear about the treaty protocol, which is not just a decision of the other 11 members of the European Community. From tonight, it will be a decision of this House, and it will be embodied in an Act of the United Kingdom Parliament.

When the third stage of EMU begins in six and a half years from now, at the latest, the United Kingdom will either have to opt in, despite the brave words of the Prime Minister about the right not to go in, or the United Kingdom will have its financial policies decided by the other 11 members without our having any voice whatever in the key decisions, because of the consequences of the

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derogation protocol contained in the treaty. The only choice on the third stage of EMU that the Government have won for the United Kingdom is the chance to have no choice on the matter.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich) *rose——*

Mr. Kaufman: I will certainly give way in a minute.

Today, the Foreign Secretary boasted of that as a remarkable achievement. He is right: it is a remarkable achievement.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I hope that this will be a constructive and friendly intervention. Has my right hon. Friend not made an absolutely clear-cut and definite case for Her Majesty's Official Opposition to vote against such a serious and far-reaching treaty?

Mr. Kaufman: I have to say with the greatest affection for my hon. Friend that the answer is no.

It is suggested that the process to the third stage is irrevocable and that the third stage will start at the very latest on 1 January 1999. The present 11 members of the Community, together with Switzerland and Sweden—powerful countries economically—which will be in the Community by then, will take part in that process. If anybody imagines that that third stage can come into operation irrevocably by 1 January 1999 and that the United Kingdom can then operate an independent policy on its own currency, that person, to use Mrs. Thatcher's words, is living in cloud cuckoo land.

There will be a third stage, which will affect the United Kingdom, and the Government say that they may use the opt-in power to opt into that third stage. Meanwhile, over these years the Government are opting our of fighting for the convergence measures that are essential for the third stage—policies to fight unemployment, policies for regional regeneration and for modernising our industrial structure.

Above all, I cannot vote for the Bill because, in the protocol on social policy, it enacts the United Kingdom exclusion from the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty. To hear the Prime Minister yesterday, one would have thought that the social chapter of the treaty was some bizarre eccentricity dreamed up in a hotbed of extremist left-wing thinking such as, for example, the research department of the Fabian Society.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister called the social chapter a

"triumph of ideology over common sense."—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 269.]

He also said that it is "corporatism at its worst." That is not a very nice way for the Prime Minister to talk about the brainchild of his chum Chancellor Kohl. Also, it is not communautaire to talk in that way about a policy that is supported by all 11 of our Community partners.

What is it about the misguided and twisted thought processes of the other 11 in the Community, at whose heart the Government wish to be, that makes the Government attack them for indulging in a triumph of ideology over common sense and "corporatism at its worst"? If it is that for Britain, why is it not that for Germany, the Netherlands or Luxembourg or any of the other countries? I shall explain why. The other 11 take a far more balanced approach to the Community than do the Government.

Yesterday the Prime Minister described the single market as providing what he called "open and competitive markets". The other 11 recognise what the Government either fail to understand or deliberately reject, which is that open and competitive markets are tolerable only provided that employed people have full protection from what would otherwise be the unrestrained freedom of capital. What is more, such provisions are necessary not only for employed people but for capital as well.

That is why the other 11, especially the Germans, are so insistent on a maximum 48-hour working week. They have the good sense and self-interest to understand that inadequate protection at work for employed people undercuts and damages their employers as well. The other 11 have had the good sense to understand that a sweatshop economy is bad for employed people and for employers wishing to be safeguarded from unfair undercutting and competition. The Secretary of State for Employment has been having that explained to her thoroughly over the past few days.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: I am sorry, but I will not give way at this stage. I am taking up time and others wish to speak.

That is why the other 11 realise that the single market must be a delicate and necessary balance between capital and those whom capital employs. The Government either fail to understand the need for such a balance or deliberately reject it. So the absence of the social chapter leaves a huge hole at the centre of the Bill, and I cannot vote for it.

The Government's attitude to the treaty shows the Conservative party's narrowness of imagination. The Bill is extremely narrow in scope, and no doubt instructions were given to parliamentary draftsmen to draw it up in a way that would curtail the scope of debate and amendment. Our advice is that there is wide scope for amendment and we shall table every amendment that we regard as necessary to turn the treaty into a document that we could support without reservation.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister spoke about the paramount nature of United Kingdom parliamentary sovereignty and instanced clause 2 as testament to the Government's commitment to parliamentary sovereignty. However, parliamentary sovereignty does not consist simply of the right to vote at the end of a debate; it also entails the right to debate without stringent and oppressive curtailment. Therefore, I notify the Government that if they seek to guillotine proceedings on the Bill, as they did on the Single European Act, we shall oppose such a guillotine and we hope that we shall be joined by all other Opposition parties, regardless of their attitude to the merits of the Bill.

We believe that the Government's approach to the Bill does not relate the treaty to the true nature of the European Community as it is certain to evolve. Even on the basis of the current membership of the Community, the Government do not link the treaty to the nature of the Community as it is now and as the treaty will carry it forward. The Community will have a social chapter regardless of the United Kingdom and it will have a single

currency and central bank regardless of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom needs to be part of those processes, not only for our sake but for the sake of the Community.

There has been a good deal of muttering and worse from the Tory party about the role of Germany——

Mr. Skinner: And from me.

Mr. Kaufman: In so far as the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) echo what is being said by the Tory party, I dissociate myself from them, just as I dissociate myself from what is being said in the Tory party. I think that I have a good deal more reason to be hostile to Germany than my hon. Friend has. Nevertheless, it is my belief that the Germans have played a valuable and constructive role within the Community and I am sure that they will continue to do so.

Apart from my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover, the principal voice attacking the Germans has been Mrs. Thatcher, who has attacked the Germans and everything that they stand for. She seems to be conducting herself like one of those persons one sometimes encounters on a bus; someone who sits there with the seats around them left strategically empty and who, as the journey proceeds, indulges in violent and incoherent imprecations against fellow passengers. I am sure that we have all experienced such people. The Prime Minister is like one of the other passengers; sitting there stiff and embarrassed, desperately trying to pretend that the eccentric person making such a commotion is not really there and is certainly nothing to do with him.

As I have said, in general Germany has played a sober and sensible role in the Community and the best way to ensure that that continues is for the United Kingdom to play an active role commensurate with our political strength within the Community. If Germany is ever likely to be a danger, an active British role is the best way to minimise it. After all, that is what was in Jean Monnet's mind when he first envisaged the European Community. Germany becomes a danger only when the United Kingdom or others relegate themselves to a second tier of membership and allow Germany or others to make the running. That was shown when, in exchange for German assistance on the social chapter opt-out at the Maastricht summit in December, the Foreign Secretary caved in to German insistence on recognition of the Yugoslav republics. In my view, that decision has helped to bring disaster to Yugoslavia.

Germany, or any other European Community country, is liable to be a danger only when left to itself. A second-tier United Kingdom in Europe, which is what the Bill entrenches, cannot immunise us from errors made by the rest of the Community. It merely implicates us in such errors while depriving us of sufficient influence to limit or to rectify them. We shall take our own initiatives instead of reacting to the initiatives of others.

The Community is certain to expand. This week, Switzerland decided to apply for membership. By the 1996 review, which is provided for in title VII of the treaty, the European Community is certain to have at least 17 members. As the Foreign Secretary pointed out today, other applications are on the table. He named some which he said would be welcome in the European Community. I was surprised by the selectivity of those that he mentioned. Since the election, I have been bewildered as to why he has concentrated so much on the role of Turkey in the European Community and in NATO. Today, he singled out Turkey as a country that he would like to see join the Community.

Mr. Hurd *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: The right hon. Gentleman certainly said that. If he is now going to correct it, I will gladly give way.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is wrong about what I said. I chose my words carefully. I said that what we needed—what Turkey needed—was a closer and stronger relationship with the Community than she has now.

Mr. Kaufman: The right hon. Gentleman said that—he can look back on his words—very much within the context of the widening of the Community and applications for membership. It seems perfectly clear from article F of title I—the article on fundamental human rights—that Turkey is ineligible for membership. A country which certainly is eligible, would be strengthened by membership and has applied for membership, is Cyprus. The Foreign Secretary mentioned it, but what he did not say—and what I have been waiting to hear him say since the debate on the address, if not before—is that the Government welcome Cyprus's application and will advocate during the United Kingdom presidency that it should be accepted by the Community. If the right hon. Gentleman wants to intervene to say that he will do that, I will gladly give way again.

As the Prime Minister pointed out yesterday, there is the clear prospect of a Community which includes former communist countries. We welcome that. It inevitably means a change in the nature of the Community, which we welcome. Yet the Government remain stuck in the time warp of seeking how to pick and choose between the processes of a Community of 12, which itself is evolving.

Worst of all, in a way, the Government do not seem to have any concept of the kind of Britain that the Community can help to bring about. Yesterday, the Prime Minister was right on one matter. As the Government pursue even more regressive economic and social policies at home, the Labour party sees the Community as a way in which some of our most vulnerable regions and citizens can be protected from the worst excesses of the Government.

In 1826, Canning said:

"I called the New World into existence, to redress the balance of the old."

Labour unashamedly and unrepentantly believes that, in this further period of Tory government, the Community may help to redress their policies. As I see my constituents in Gorton suffering in their many thousands from grinding poverty of a kind not seen in many other Community countries, I shall certainly see whether there are ways in which the European Community can alleviate their predicament. As my constituents suffer from 25 per cent. unemployment, I certainly want to see whether the Community's regional and social funds can help some of them to find work. As I see the environment of my constituents under threat—for example, from the privatised water authority which is trying to take away the one bit of open countryside available to my constituents—I shall do all I can to call on the Community to protect their environment.

[Mr. Kaufman]

Looking much more widely, as I see countless millions starving in the developing world while the Government cut by half the meagre amount that they provide for overseas aid, I shall certainly welcome Community policies to aid the developing world. For its social provisions, its cohesion fund, its regional and environmental policies and its policies on the developing world, I welcome the increasing role of the European Community, as do tens of thousands of my constituents and millions of others in Britain.

The Maastricht treaty, as agreed by our 11 partners, sets out the framework for a wider, more outward-looking Europe with a social conscience. For that treaty, I could and would vote wholeheartedly, but the Bill offers only parts of that treaty. In voting for our amendment, the Labour party will vote for the real Maastricht treaty—for the kind of Europe that Britain really needs.

5.26 pm

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Those who have been Members of previous Parliaments may think that I have already given an indication of my attitudes to the European Community, but perhaps they will forgive me if I say a few words about the proposals before the House and the vote.

I strongly support the agreement that was reached at Maastricht, and of course I strongly urge everybody to vote for the motion. The Prime Minister was positive—and quite rightly so. That should give a clear lead to hon. Members on how they should vote.

There is no doubt that Maastricht is a great leap forward. It does not contain everything that I would like, and I may say a word about that in a moment, but what is there is undoubtedly yet another great leap forward by the Community. The deputy at the Foreign Office said when making a speech in The Hague recently—The Hague seems to be a popular rendezvous for speeches—that some of the British do not like great leaps forward: my God, they do not.

I can recall two great leaps forward. The first was the proposal to build Maplin airport on the east coast, which would have given us a superb airport equal to the greatest in the world. We could have done away with all the troubles over London Heathrow and the neighbouring airports. All the plans were made, and what happened? The Labour Government took office in 1974 and Tony Crosland scrapped them. Since then, we have shuffled, shuffled and shuffled. The result is that, to the passenger, Heathrow is chaotic. We increase other little airports bit by bit, but still do not have an airport that is comparable——

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Edward Heath: I am sorry, no—unless you own Heathrow, of course. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Wilshire: Before my right hon. Friend gives Heathrow away to some place out in the English channel or wherever he wants to put it, will he give a little thought to the 50,000 people who work there and the large number of my constituents who depend on it to earn a living?

Mr. Heath: It is terribly important. They would work at the new airport and would have a fast train service into my hon. Friend's constituency and a major motorway if they wanted to travel by car. They would be infinitely better off.

The second great leap is the channel tunnel. We negotiated the channel tunnel in 1972, and in 1974 the Labour party swept it away. Now we have negotiated again, and the tunnel has actually joined up. But we have no fast link to go with it. For five years, the Government and others have been trying to reach a decision. They have been shuffling along, but they have been shuffling sideways and backwards, and they still have not reached decision about the fast link. I agree with the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office that not every Briton likes a great leap forward—but that is what we have got, and we shall carry it through.

I find it sad that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and the Labour party are unable to vote for the motion. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I have never criticised the Labour party for changing its policy and I have welcomed the fact that its present leader has brought it into the European Community and acknowledged that this country is there to stay and will develop within it.

However, the Opposition amendments are not understood in the Parliaments of our fellow Community members. The word will go across Europe: "The Labour party has turned again. This time it has voted against Maastricht." [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Oh, yes, that is what people will say. I know them so well. The Labour party could perfectly well have voted for the Bill and then tabled amendments to include the other aspects which it thinks should have been in the Bill, or to delete some of its provisions. That would have been a splendid thing to do, and it would have shown that the great majority of Members of the British Parliament strongly favoured Maastricht. The Labour party's decision is a matter of sadness to me.

However, the criticisms made by the permanent opponents of the Community give me great encouragement. When I hear the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) explain how the Community will develop and how terrifying it all is, I feel great confidence in the future. I could not be more delighted. I shall quite understand if those people abstain, or vote against the Bill, or whatever they want to do. But it is rather sad that, after more than 20 years, we are still having the argument about the treaty of Rome, and about whether we should have become a member of the Community.

Is it not terribly sad that we are hearing more talk about the referendum? The right hon. Member for Chesterfield calls for another referendum. He managed to bring about the previous referendum—by twisting the arm of his Prime Minister, who had given an undertaking never to have a referendum. But has the right hon. Gentleman ever accepted the result of that referendum? No, not for a minute. If we had another referendum, he would not accept that decision, either. Why does the right hon. Gentleman want to institute such alien institutions into our procedures? We have centuries of history here, and we do not want to disturb them with ideas gained from afar. There can be no question of a referendum about any of these items.

Mr. Benn: The right hon. Gentleman has the merit of consistency. In the 1970 election, he spoke of the full-hearted consent of the British Parliament and people—and without ever varying from that opinion, he has consistently denied the voters any right to a say in their own future.

Sir Edward Heath: If the right hon. Gentleman had ever been able to secure a majority of 112 in the House of Commons, he would not talk like that. That majority was obtained on an entirely free vote on the Conservative side, and 69 of his right hon. and hon. Friends went against their three-line Whip to support it. That is sufficient standing for this country's relationship with Europe under the treaty of Rome.

Now the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, and others, have a new approach. The world has changed; the Soviet Union has disintegrated; the whole situation is different. Now, apparently, all we need is a little co-operation here and there, and all will be well. "Let us have more co-operation," they say.

Co-operation was tried through the formation of the Council of Europe, which still exists as a forum for discussion—and is very useful. But it was because Europe found that it could not rebuild itself through co-operation that the founding fathers—Jean Monnet has been mentioned—introduced the proposals for the Community. Those proposals were made by the French and accepted by the Germans—full credit to them. Co-operation does not produce the answer; it is not sufficient. I shall say a word or two later about defence and foreign policy.

I am sorry to disappoint the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, but the Community is going from strength to strength. I hope that one day he will appreciate it.

I miss some things. I miss the social chapter, so I am not in total agreement with my colleagues in government on that matter. It would have been better both for ourselves and for the Community if we had accepted the social chapter and then pointed out the parts of it that we could not accept. Such a procedure is commonly used within the Community, and it is right. What I do not accept about the social chapter is its basis of having no arrangements for workers. I do not want this country to become the sweatshop of Europe. I did not say that before the election, and I accept full responsibility for not doing so.

Mr. Moate: Rubbish.

Sir Edward Heath: My hon. Friend has captured the habit of another of my hon. Friends, the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). They both have a limited vocabulary on rubbish.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West) *rose*——

Sir Edward Heath: No, I am sorry, but both my hon. Friends must retain their rubbish.

I am glad that the new Secretary of State for Employment has taken the matter of working hours in hand. She recognises that the figures produced were entirely bogus and not justifiable by any employer. It is not rationally justifiable to say that it will cost an extra £5 billion if some people reduce their working hours and others do the work. I am glad that the new Secretary of State has recognised that problem at once, and has gone off to tackle it. I wish her every success. My comments apply to the other provisions affecting labour, too. I am sorry about what has happened, but I am sure that, with the new Secretary of State's assistance, we shall be able to solve the problem.

The Government's attitude to open boundaries within the Community also perturbs me. We agreed on boundaries when we signed the treaty of Rome in 1972. The agreement has been there all the time. Some of my hon. Friends seem never to have read the treaty—of course, they must have read it. We intended to open our frontiers to everyone.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Sir Edward Heath: Let me finish my argument about open frontiers—I shall have more to say to my hon. Friend.

As has been said, other countries have other ways of dealing with open boundaries. Why is it so impossible for us to use other ways? It is extraordinary that, because of the unity of the United Kingdom and its former constituent part—now Eire—there are no controls between the two countries. Yet apparently we must have controls on the borders with the rest of the Community. No Minister has given a logical explanation for that.

How do we deal with people coming from Eire? Of course, there are people out of uniform who know perfectly well whom they want to identify, and they act accordingly. Why can we not do that in our relations with the other countries of the Community?

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Edward Heath: No, I am sorry, but I want to finish.

It would be perfectly possible for us to operate such a system, exactly as the other countries do. Germany has got on top of its terrorists, and so have France and Italy. They did not choose other means. We have not got on top of our terrorists, and we have some open doors. That hardly seems logical. We could use other methods——

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Edward Heath: No, I have not finished.

We could use those other methods, and deal with the problem satisfactorily. The courts may say, "You have got to do that."

Of course there are vested interests. There are vested interests among the corps at the gates who carry out customs checks. They must be re-employed somewhere else, and the same applies to any of those now on check duties who cannot be absorbed.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My right hon. Friend referred frequently to the contents of the European Communities Act 1972 and to the treaty of Rome. He will recall that his own White Paper contained a number of significant promises to the British people, such as the promises that there would not be a federation of provinces in Europe, that essential national sovereignty would be retained and that we should always be able to exercise a veto. That was set out expressing and explicitly in the White Paper. Is my right hon. Friend now telling us, on this important day and in this important debate for which we have not had a White Paper, that he repudiates what was said in the White Paper that he produced in 1971?

Sir Edward Heath: I certainly have regard to the 1971 White Paper. I believe that the social chapter is acceptable to us. If there are points on which we want to make reservations, we have a means by which to do so.

Mr. Budgen: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for having said so frankly that he had always anticipated that our domestic system of immigration controls would not be possible after 1972. Did he tell the British people that before 1972? I am sure that he understands that those of us who are sceptical about all that has followed 1972 have a lurking suspicion. We have been told time after time after time that we have nothing to worry about, yet we then find that those who have led us into Europe have deceived us and have denied the House of Commons their true belief about the consequences of the steps that have been taken.

Sir Edward Heath: I forgive my hon. Friend his language, because I know how passionately he feels about these things. He has nothing to worry about now. Maastricht means that there is nothing to worry about, because there are other ways in which to deal with the problem. We may now move on and—*[Laughter.]*

We come to the question of foreign policy and defence. One phrase used by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary slightly worried me. He said that we were "moving away" from what the Community is at present. I do not believe that we are moving away, and I do not believe that it is possible to move away. I will come to the answer in a moment.

In foreign policy, it is not only a question of meeting to discuss events and seeing whether we agree. What has proved to be so necessary and what is lacking everywhere —in the United Nations, in the United States and in the Community—is any foresight or pre-planning for events that may occur. That was the case in the Gulf. The danger of President Saddam Hussein should have been foreseen, and we should have recognised that we had supplied him with all the weapons he needed. We should have recognised that there was a permanent feud between Saddam Hussein and Kuwait, and we should have ensured that the war was prevented.

Is there to be a special secretariat, which is purely European, to deal with foreign policy? We have not heard about it. It is said that nothing must be put under the Commission. Very well: there should then be an entirely separate organisation which could do the pre-planning, the analysis and everything else required on a joint basis.

The same applies to defence. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that defence was not part of the issue. He is labouring under a misapprehension when he says that a European arrangement could interfere with NATO. There is an American pillar in NATO, and we could have a European pillar in NATO. Of course there are vested interests. The hundreds of people we keep in Washington do not like the idea, but that must change, and it will change, because the Americans will withdraw many of their forces from Europe. That is understandable, and I do not complain. We must recognise that it will happen and prepare ourselves for it.

We must also recognise the dangers that still lie towards the east. That is why it is important to have a military element—a defence force—which is European. That has certain consequences. One consequence is that such a force must be organised in a European fashion. The Foreign Secretary says that, under Maastricht, there will be separate columns. It will not be possible to carry on with that, and that is why the fears expressed by the right hon. Member for Gorton give me such encouragement.

One cannot imagine organising any country in the world in which the economic and social section is under Parliament but a separate Foreign Office section is in another part and a separate defence section is in yet another part. No one would dream of doing that. Europe will move towards a position in which, because of the connections between all three sections, all three will be dealt with together. It may be said that the matter can be settled in 1996; I hope it is. We must face reality in all this.

I deal now with the expansion of the Community and with the central European countries. It has been said that we should stretch the Community from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with the inclusion of Russia. That is entirely unrealistic; it is fantasy. We hear about Europe stretching to the Urals. What will happen to the rest of the former Soviet Union east of the Urals where so much of its wealth lay—the gold, the minerals and the timber? No one has a suggestion to make. It is said that the expansion of the Community will be at the top of the agenda for the British presidency. We must be realistic. We cannot say that we like to have lots of friends, so we welcome them all.

I deal first with the European Free Trade Association countries. From the point of view of the economy, I have no doubt that Sweden, Finland, Austria and Switzerland can match the requirements. We should be careful about Switzerland. It has been a federal country for centuries, which is very dangerous. We must sit apart so that we do not get contaminated by federalism.

One essential point in terms of the new defence situation is that those countries cannot be neutral. If they become members of the Community, they must share the defence of the Community and the cost of that defence —[HON. MEMBERS: "The Irish Republic?"] I hope that the Government will accept that and will not merely say, "Come in, we do not mind what you do." I know about Eire. I believe that Eire will be prepared to join a European defence. It has always objected to being tied up in an American-dominated NATO defence.

I now come to the former Soviet countries. It worries me that they are being misled by the things being said. I give two figures. The standard of living of the former Soviet-controlled territories is 32·1 per cent. of the Community average. The figure for Russia is 29·6 per cent. How can those countries be welcomed in, and how can they live on equal terms with the rest of the Community? It is just not possible. What is their maximum possible rate of growth after being suppressed for 50 years under Soviet tyranny? Even if it averaged 4 per cent., like the growth in the Pacific countries, how many years would it take before those countries could match the Community? That is the reality of life; we must deal with that.

I worry intensely about misleading those people and about causing them to think that they can come in after a couple of years. Those countries can be associated with the Community and we can help them in every way possible. However, they do not have democracies. The President of Poland now says that he must have plenary powers so that he can deal with the Polish situation. How does that fit in with the democratic addition to the Community? We must be as helpful as possible, but at the same time as realistic as possible.

I have been absolutely disgusted by the bigoted, xenophobic, rabid statements made about Germany. I do not wish to enter into personalities, as the right hon. Member for Gorton did; I will make only a few general statements about what has been uttered. Those of us who fought through the second world war and across Germany and who helped in the rebuilding of Germany feel ashamed of what has been said. We gave the Germans their constitution—a federal system; it is called the Federal Republic of Germany—so why should we damn federalism? The recovery that the Germans have achieved is incredible, and their contribution to Europe has been immense. It continues today. They have taken complete responsibility for 18 million people in eastern Germany. They are rebuilding it; they have given it democracy—what more could we ask of them?

When the Hungarians opened their gates and the refugees came through, they went into Austria and Germany in their hundreds of thousands. The Germans accepted them and got jobs for them. We did nothing like that; we did not take these people or welcome them. I heard it muttered on the Government Front Bench that we won the cold war and won freedom for all these people. That is not entirely true, and in any case we did nothing to solve their problems for them.

What about the Germans' contribution to the former Soviet countries? We have achieved nothing of the sort. These are the hard facts of life. I do not understand how people can damn the Germans and suggest that we join forces with the Americans to stand against them. I hope that this House will have nothing to do with such sentiments.

The future is clear: the Maastricht treaty will be ratified, the Bill will be passed and we will spend many days discussing it. This has been a well-attended debate, which I understand continued until breakfast time. I do not think that the Leader of the House can have read the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House recommending that we abandon all-night sittings. Perhaps during the Whitsun recess someone will give him a copy, so that, when we debate amendments to the Bill, we can observe the Committee's wishes.

I congratulate the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary on their achievements. Let us continue to be positive and thereby bring about the Community that we all want.

5.52 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): It is a great pleasure to follow the Father of the House —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Will Members who are leaving the Chamber do the hon. Gentleman who has the Floor the courtesy of leaving quietly?

Sir Russell Johnston: It is a great pleasure to follow the Father of the House, whose contribution to the European Community over so many years has been so special, and whose remarks this evening, apart from being sharp and often extremely amusing and direct, were also extremely wise. I hope that Ministers heard them clearly.

I must admit that, after dawn this morning, I had begun to find the call of Morpheus rather more seductive than even the most well-constructed arguments. Nevertheless, I have no hesitation in saying that this has been an excellent debate, with powerful differences forcefully and articulately set out—including some first-rate maiden speeches. I must also pay tribute to the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who is looking rather pale and not entirely interesting, and to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), both of whom summed up in the morning sunshine with a lucidity and humour which, at that hour, I could not match.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) set out our position yesterday and made it clear that, while we will support ratification of the Maastricht treaty and can see no justification in logic for voting against, for supporting reasoned amendments or for abstaining, we also believe that the treaty could and should have gone much further, and that because it did not, it failed the Community and its aspiring members in several ways.

The treaty accentuates the well-rehearsed democratic deficit and enhances the power of national Ministers—the Government welcome that—more than that of European parliamentarians. It advances qualified majority voting far too cautiously. Liberal Democrats want a wider but deeper Europe; not the spurious spectre of the single united states of Europe which Mrs. Thatcher advances, but a decentralised federal Europe of European states, with national sovereignty pooled in the European Council and Council of Ministers, and popular sovereignty pooled in the European Parliament.

Liberal Democrats are federalists, with a long and consistent position on this matter. By federalism, we mean what everyone else in Europe, apart from most United Kingdom Conservatives but including the other European Conservatives, means: a dispersal of government between different levels of democratic authority—supranational, national, sub-national—in which all levels are co-ordinated but none is subordinated. That is the view taken by the European Conservatives in the European Parliament who have joined a group committed to a federal Europe.

It is strange that we hear so much in this House about federalism meaning centralisation. That is the opposite of what it represents—as the Conservatives' wiser brethen in Strasbourg know. I do not say that British Conservatives are reactionary nationalists opposed to sharing power with foreigners, although some of them are. The problem is that they oppose sharing power with anyone at all. Federalism means devolution of powers and separation of powers. The Conservatives oppose federalism in Scotland and decentralisation in England and Wales. Naturally enough, therefore, they oppose it in Europe.

For many Conservatives, the British state is centralist and authoritarian and sufficient unto itself. Modern forms of democracy, which is what federalism is about, threaten that monopoly of power. Conservatives have long mistaken strong government for single-party government. They oppose electoral systems in which seats won, match votes cast. They oppose citizens' rights written down and asserted in constitutional law, much preferring archaic convention. They oppose democratic decisions in the European Council, preferring the craft of negative consensus—which they call the veto.

Conservatives oppose the widening of the competence of the European Community's jurisdiction, preferring the old-fashioned, diplomatic conventions. They dissemble

[Sir Russell Johnston]

over sovereignty and puff up their claims that the Westminster Parliament controls matters that it no longer controls. That is certainly true of macroeconomics.

Then they seek to bolster the so-called nation state. What is a nation state? Was Yugoslavia a nation state? It contained six or seven nationalities—Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Macedonians. Here we have four—the Scots, Welsh, English and Irish. Mrs. Thatcher was very quick to call for recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, and she was right to do so. Incidentally, she agreed on that occasion with Germany. I brought a newspaper today which contains the headline "No substitute for the nation state", accompanied by a picture that launched a thousand vetoes.

There is no consistency in that, because Mrs. Thatcher, like many Conservatives, rejects any devolution within the United Kingdom when there are calls by clearly established majorities for self-government, which is, after all, well short of independence. The really important development is not, although many people talk about it, the revival of nationalism in central and eastern Europe —that is a reaction to the escape from communism—but the burgeoning of cross-border political co-operation. Tomorrow's Europe will be more concerned about whether individuals are Liberals, Socialists, Conservatives or Christian democrats than with whether they are German, Dutch, British or Scots.

Maastricht leaves the so-called common foreign and security policy and the entire dossier of judicial and interior affairs separate from the European Community. The Father of the House has already referred to this. Even though some pragmatic convergence between the Community and the political co-operation procedure is proposed, the union's external arm is left too weak for systematic and decisive action. Many controversial internal matters, such as immigration and asylum, which were mentioned in particular yesterday, are left outside the legal competence of the court of justice and the European Parliament.

The pooling of national sovereignty in both internal and external security matters requires us to call forth the European citizen elector. In place of the secret manipulation of national Ministers and civil servants, we want open government and democratic accountability. What is needed is nothing less than to turn the European Community into a parliamentary democracy. We must have ambitions, ideals and goals, and our ambition is to make the Government of the European Community an improvement on the existing old nation states.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—I am sorry that he is not here—that, with this Bill as with other measures, we are talking about democracy. I would also contend that the Liberal Democrat concept of democracy is much more open, pluralist and decentralist than that of the political forces with which the right hon. Member for Chesterfield has been long associated and whose views he espouses.

We must introduce a uniform electoral procedure in time for the elections of June 1994. There could be no more dramatic way to redeem the United Kingdom's reputation and end its isolation than to enhance the representative capability of the European Parliament by ensuring that seats won are matched by votes cast. I believe that there is support for that reform on both sides of the House.

We must also take urgent action between now and 1994 to build up European Community citizenship in terms of social, cultural, civil and electoral rights, not least the implementation of article 8b of the treaty on the rights of European Community citizens to vote and stand in municipal and European elections. We have to allow people to identify with the communities in which they live. These duties and entitlements must be developed hand in hand with good information policies, with improved access by all to legal redress and with the full accomplishment of freedom of movement of people, to which the Father of the House referred, through the abolition of all internal border controls.

The immigration policy may have to be tough, but it must be based on a common legal base that is also explicitly anti-racist. We normally use the word "racist" in connection with attitudes to people who are black or a particular colour, but one can be racist about the Germans. I endorse every word spoken by the Father of the House on that subject.

At the end of this morning's debate, at about 7 o'clock, the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) made an extremely interesting speech on mobility within the European Community and external immigration controls. I urge the Minister to look at that speech. After all, the two basic principles of the Single European Act are the free movement of people and mobility of labour.

When Britain signed the Single European Act, she subscribed to these principles. I was exceedingly disappointed to see the Foreign Secretary, who has now left the Chamber, going to Brussels with what amounted to a Thatcherite series of demands, which boil down to an attempt by Britain to retain the full panoply of customs and immigration control.

The Government's justification for this was that it was necessary so as to regulate drugs, the illegal importation of weapons, terrorist activities and the spread of rabies. Rabies is certainly a separate case, and the movement of animals can be separately supervised. However, it is wrong for the Government to imply that drugs and terrorism are effectively controlled at main customs points. If this were the case, as the Father of the House so rightly said, we would not have open borders with Ireland. The control of drugs and terrorist activities depend on much more effective police and security co-operation within the European Community. The Government should be talking about going way beyond the limited co-operation that they established at Trevi.

Immigration control presents serious problems of definition and of common standards of implementation. However, it is in our interests to achieve this rather than to resist it, and the Germans, who have the problem of an enormous number of people flowing in every day, would be our strong allies.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Does the hon. Gentleman see any connection between the fact that southern Germany accepted most of these immigrants from eastern Europe and the fact that it is also the place where Die Republikaner, which is a Nazi organisation, has had the most growth and impact in electoral terms? Does he accept that there is a link between immigration in southern Germany and the rise in extremism there?

Sir Russell Johnston: Southern Germany has traditionally been more right-wing than northern Germany, but the hon. Gentleman has a point. If a large number of people flow in, putting pressure on housing and jobs, there will inevitably be a reaction on politics. I do not deny that. *[Interruption.]* I am not arguing with the hon. Gentleman, but I think that he is missing my point. I am simply saying that the European Community as a whole must sort out a common policy and it must operate, as the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding said, external borders and ensure consistency of policy. It is much better to spend money on this than on controls within the Community, which will create costs for travellers and businesses.

There was some progress on foreign and security policy, but there was a bit of confusion. Yesterday, the Prime Minister said in reply to a question I put to him:

"would he"—

that is, me—

"prefer our foreign policy to be determined by the majority vote of other countries? That is not a proposition to which I am prepared to agree on behalf of this country."—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 267.]

However, the Maastrict treaty has a number of declarations at the back of it. For example, there is the

"Declaration on voting in the field of the common foreign and security policy".

It reads:

"The Conference agrees that, with regard to Council decisions requiring unanimity, Member States will, to the extent possible, avoid preventing a unanimous decision where a qualified majority exists in favour of that decision."

I should have thought that that and what the Prime Minister said yesterday were at variance. In foreign and security policy, there should be an end to the separation from the judicial and parliamentary processes of the European Community. In 1998, the treaty of Brussels will expire, and the Western European Union should be rolled up inside the EC. Likewise, on interior affairs, the protection of our civil liberty requires decisions to be taken inside the union.

Lastly, we must recognise the financial consequences of Maastricht. Practically nothing has been said about that. The cohesion fund is needed to complement existing structural funds, and both better financial control and better democratic accountability are required in the use of the funds. European monetary union is impossible without greater economic and social convergence. One might well suspect the Government's motives. Are they set already on rejecting the Delors 2 package? We are talking about 21 billion ecu over five years, which is 0·25 per cent. of Community gross domestic product. That is a relatively small percentage.

The burden on the United Kingdom would be eased if we moved from the regressive value added tax to the progressive GDP formula. We must support the Commission—I am sorry, but I must drink some water. Fortunately, I am finishing my speech. Finishing is not the same as finished.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): It would be dramatic if the hon. Gentleman were to faint.

Sir Russell Johnston: If I fell on the hon. Gentleman, I am sure that I would not be the first thing to fall on him.

All the reforms of which I speak require courage and flexibility. My colleagues and I believe in them and believe that they offer hope. We Liberal Democrats are firmly resolved to continue to work for a new Europe that will inspire its people. We believe such a Europe to be an aim that is fully possible and achievable.

6.11 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I am grateful to be called, Madam Deputy Speaker, in this interesting and important debate.

Before the Maastricht meeting, I was concerned about three issues and what would emerge following their consideration. First, I was concerned about whether there would be exemption from the social chapter. Secondly, I was concerned whether there would be a single currency to which the United Kingdom would be tied automatically, along with a single bank. Thirdly, I was concerned about where we were going with federalism. I thought that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister negotiated splendidly on those issues, and that he carried the day. Those of us who are Euro-sceptics, as I am to an extent, owe my right hon. Friend a great tribute for his negotiating skills at Maastricht.

During a general election, there are difficulties when it comes to how one stands on Europe and the attitudes of the parties. The electorate vote on issues other than Europe. In the final week of the campaign, however, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that he did not support a united states of Europe and that he was not a federalist. I believe that that statement was one of the reasons why the Conservative party won the general election.

My right hon. Friend demonstrated his ability to defend the constitution. He said that there would be no proportional representation. He made it clear that he would not have assemblies scattered around the United Kingdom, and nor would he have devolution. He said that there would be no federalism. Conservative Members are sitting on the Government Benches because my right hon. Friend made his position clear on those issues.

I am still concerned about some issues. For example, I am concerned about over-regulation, which seems to be a disease in Europe. It spreads like measles. Over-regulation will be resented by the British people, and it could make economies in Europe uncompetitive with those in the rest of the world. If that happens, the United Kingdom will suffer more than the other countries of Europe. That is because we export and import worldwide to a greater extent than any other country in the Community.

There are growing second-level economies within a free market in the Pacific basin and south-east Asia and we must compete with them. If we burden ourselves with regulations galore, we shall be unable to compete and over 20 years Europe could become a relatively depressed area.

I am still concerned about the social chapter. I am glad that it was cut out, as it were, in the Maastricht treaty, but I do not want it to come back to us in penny numbers. When it came to the number of hours that could be worked in a week, we won the book only to have certain chapters removed from it. The Government seem to be weakening on the 48 hours proposal.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): And on the parental leave directive.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I do not want to become involved in footnotes and other minutiae. Much as I respect my hon. Friend, I want to confine myself to three or four general principles.

I trust that we are all firm on the basic individual factors that are set out in the social chapter.

I am still concerned about the exchange rate mechanism. I believe that our link with it has stopped us reducing interest rates to the level at which they should now rest. Our emergence from the recession is being delayed because of that. Japan and America seem to be picking up more quickly. Both have real interest rates only 40 per cent. of those which apply in the United Kingdom. We had to reduce the real interest rate, which is what I am talking about, to 2 per cent. to get out of the 1929-31 recession.

It seemed when I listened this morning to "Today" that some progress has been made with the GATT negotiations. However, the fact that we have to pay so much for our food reduces the United Kingdom's competitiveness and handicaps the third world. Trade as against aid is the way in which third-world countries can pick themselves up and become prosperous. We want them to have the ability to grow crops and to sell them here, not Oxfam collections and the rest.

Our financial services are the best in the world. When the GATT negotiations have come to an end, we must ensure that our financial services are allowed to blossom in every way.

Our bit-by-bit movement in Europe is rather like blind men engaging in a tug of war. We have six on one side and six on the other. The person in the middle is the umpire. We are pulled backwards and forwards and suddenly there is the cry, "It has gone—it is over." It seems that at Maastricht we won yet another tug of war. Well, overall we did not win and we did not lose, but there is the opportunity of a Europe with which I could go along.

Sir Teddy Taylor: No.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I could go along with it. I am not speaking for my hon. Friend, and I would not have the arrogance to do so. He speaks for himself as I speak for myself.

I have always been a referendum man on important issues and I am sorry that we are not having one on the treaty. About 10 or 12 years ago, I wrote a chapter in a paper recommending the use of referendums.

Mr. Tony Marlow: (Northampton, North): My right hon. Friend can vote for an amendment.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: If there is an amendment on the issue and a Division is called, I shall be sorely tempted. My hon. Friend and I may find ourselves in the same Lobby.

I have made it clear where I stand on the issue that is before the House. I am against federalism, single monetary policy and the social chapter. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, with his superb negotiating skills, returned with a package that has caused me to decide—it has taken me several days to work this out—to vote with the Government this evening. I shall do so "on approval," rather as one sometimes buys stamps. That approval will not be confined to a week because I think that we have one or two years to decide these political matters.

My instinct tells me that the United Kingdom is much more sceptical about Europe than it was two or three years ago. It is moving that way. That pulls me in one direction. On the other hand, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister achieved far more than I expected at Maastricht. Our presidency of the Community begins in July and I shall be fascinated by what happens then. Over the next year or two, I shall have again to make a judgment. I shall do so on each individual occasion, but I have made my judgment for tonight.

6.20 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I will not follow the explanations of the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson); perhaps I should give my explanation of what I intend to do tonight.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) made an impressive speech. He has a real sense of perspective on these occasions. I salute him as one of the architects of the modern European Community, and certainly of Britain's entry into it.

We need to consider these European matters with some perspective. The Maastricht treaty is the culmination of an enormously creative surge of European co-operation and integration. The period that began in 1985 with an agreement on a Single European Act has seen progress in a number of areas—for example, the drive towards a single European market of 324 million people, a number that will be increased through the agreement with the EFTA countries.

There was adoption of the social charter in 1989 by 11 member states, although unfortunately not the United Kingdom. There is now the agreement of the same 11 to the social chapter in the treaty. New EC competences have been adopted in a number of areas, including the environment, transport, aspects of education, culture, public health, consumer protection and the development of co-operation.

There is the staged introduction of economic and monetary union, the development of common foreign and security policies, co-operation in justice and home affairs, and last but not least, new powers for the European Parliament. That is a considerable body of achievements over the past seven years.

There are hon. Members on both sides of the House who, like the right hon. Member for Brent, North, are Euro-sceptics, and they view all those developments as unwarranted interference by the centralising hand of Brussels, which they believe is against the best interests of this country. They are profoundly wrong. The moves towards greater integration have come about not because of pressure from Brussels or from Jacques Delors, whatever his diplomatic skills, but because the representatives of the nation states of the European Community, including the United Kingdom, voluntarily agreed not only to co-operate, but to pool sovereignty. That is what has happened.

The leaders of the nation states have agreed to that pooling of sovereignty because they think that it is in the best interests of their peoples. They all believe that a strong internal European market will create the background to a new economic advance, and that a single European currency will provide the necessary economic and monetary stability.

With the exception of the United Kingdom, those nation states, which include a number of right-of-centre Governments, believe that a framework of social rights

will ensure that European employees share in economic prosperity. They also understand that effective environmental policy must be at least Europewide.

The national leaders of Europe rightly consider that the best way to maximise the influence of their particular countries is not by standing alone, but by creating a common foreign and security policy. They also understand that the democratic deficit cannot be repaired nationally. The only effective way to make European institutions more accountable is by increasing the powers of the European Parliament. In other words, the recent astonishing advance of the EC has been the response to the common needs of and the pressures from the peoples and nations of the EC—not the work, as is sometimes suggested by some Conservative and Labour Members, of power-crazed bureaucrats in Brussels.

In the 1990s, the EC will face new pressures and challenges, and the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup mentioned some of those. Above all, those challenges and pressures will come from the collapse of the Soviet empire in central and eastern Europe and from the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself. The argument of the anti-integrationists—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) would be quiet for a moment; he might then acquire some wisdom.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: It is a measure of the speech.

Mr. Radice: I hope so.

The argument of the anti-integrationists is that reaching out to the peoples of central and eastern Europe will rule out further European integration. That was the argument made by my pair, the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). That view is profoundly mistaken. Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary all want to join the EC by the end of the century, and they are right to hope to do so. The reason that they want to join the EC is not because they believe that they are joining a very loose association of nation states but because the EC is economically, socially and institutionally coherent and dynamic.

Those countries also understand that, if the EC is not to collapse under its own weight, it will have to adapt its institutional framework to a membership that is likely to expand from the current 12 to at least 20 by the end of the century. We must consider the institutional arrangements, and we must have more majority voting. That is the reality. In short, deepening and widening will have to go hand in hand.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister for the first time attempted to set out—albeit in his usual prosaic fashion—a post-Thatcherite agenda for Europe, which was certainly a welcome development. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House will have noted the right hon. Gentleman's affirmation of what he called the

"core beliefs . . . of the Community: its commitment to democracy, its framework of law, the creation of a genuine single market and"—

I noted his words carefully—

"the fact that the Community exists to promote the ever closer union of the peoples of Europe."

That is a far cry from the nationalistic knee-jerk reaction that we heard so often from Mrs. Thatcher. Many of us appreciated the right hon. Gentleman's recognition of the key role of the EC in managing what he called

"the biggest transition to democracy in our continent in its entire history."—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 272-3.]

Although many of us welcomed the right hon. Gentleman's new tone and his move away from the negative carping of Mrs. Thatcher, the problem that the Bill presents for the Opposition is that parts of it were designed specifically to appease the Thatcherites, and in particular the two opt-outs negotiated at Maastricht. The right to opt out of European monetary union was patently a device to buy Mrs. Thatcher's support and that of a number of Thatcherite Members.

I do not believe that that is necessary any longer. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition rightly said yesterday in his excellent speech, the Government will have to decide on their attitude to EMU within the lifetime of this Parliament. The delay in committing ourselves to the principle of EMU creates unnecessary uncertainty—among investors, about the future of the City, and among our European partners.

On the other hand, commitment in principle would show that we were serious about EMU. It would lend credibility to our anti-inflationary strategy and it would strengthen our bargaining position not just on the siting of the Eurofed—we are in a weak position at the moment—but on the crucial question of the timing of the introduction of the third stage and the conditions that should be attached to it. If we could decide on the principle, we would be in a much more powerful position as a country.

The Prime Minister yesterday called the Labour party's objection to the opt-out from the social chapter "a triumph of ideology over common sense". In fact, his phrase accurately described the Government's attitude to the social chapter. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, the social chapter is about the improvement of the working environment and working conditions, information for and the consultation of individual employees, the equality of men and women and the integration of the long-term unemployed into the work force. So far from being a corporatist tract, as the Prime Minister and, apparently, the leader of the Liberal Democrats seem to believe, it is about improving individual rights. The Liberal Democrats should have a more careful look at what is contained in the social chapter. It might be good for them.

I have been a committed supporter of the EC for at least 30 years, but even so, because the Bill contains the two opt-outs, I cannot support it as it stands. I strongly back the reasoned amendment in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends, and I shall vote for it tonight.

On the other hand, once the reasoned amendment is rejected, it would be wrong for the Labour party to vote against the Bill, and I am glad that it will not do so. The Bill is about much more than two opt-outs. It enacts a large part of the treaty agreed at Maastricht, including majority voting on environment, youth training and public health, the establishment of a cohesion fund, the strengthening of regional policy and the role of the regions, which has been mentioned by a number of my hon. Friends, the new European citizenship, the entrenchment of subsidiarity——

Mr. Spearing: Oh.

Mr. Radice: Yes, indeed. However, I shall not get involved in hair-splitting with my hon. Friend, because I know that I would lose.

The Bill also enacts a useful increase in the powers of the European Parliament. Therefore, a vote against the Bill would be seen as a rejection not just of the two opt-outs but of the whole Maastricht treaty, and that would be wrong.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does that mean that, if the hon. Gentleman thought that the reasoned amendment would win, he would not vote for it?

Mr. Radice: No, it does not mean that. I would vote for the reasoned amendment because it is a sensible amendment. It is an amendment, not a vote in principle against the Bill.

A vote against the Bill would be seen as a rejection of the Maastricht treaty and as reversing Labour's hard-won position. I have been a pro-European for many years, and I have watched the Labour party change, so I know that that has taken some time.

If we voted against the Bill, it would cut off the Labour party from our sister parties in the Community, all of which are to vote for the Maastricht treaty. Whatever the provocation for us of the Prime Minister's opt-outs, our sister parties would not understand if the Labour party joined the followers of Le Pen in France, the Republicans in Germany and the Thatcherites in Britain in voting against Maastricht. Those who do so should be aware of the company they are keeping.

There is no salvation for Labour as an anti-European or even a reluctantly European party. We must continue to develop our strategy and our policies within a European framework. Labour's future, like that of Britain as a whole, lies in the European Community.

6.34 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I listened with great interest to the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), telling of the enthusiasm and freedom with which Members of the House gave a Second Reading to the European Communities Bill.

I was a Member of the House at that time. I have talked to Tory Members whose association chairmen were warned by telephone that there would be serious consequences if they did not vote for the Common Market. I was also present at a meeting when great pressure was put on certain Unionist Members of the House to ensure that they joined the Common Market lobby.

Feelings in the House at that time were as wild as I have ever witnessed, yet the former Prime Minister tells the nation that in that debate there was a wonderful freedom. I saw one Labour Member beating up another Member of the House with his Order Paper. It is wrong, in laughter and as a sort of sneer, for the former Prime Minister to bluff the nation and tell them that we were all willing to go down the Common Market road. I was never a Common Marketeer, and I never will be. My experience after 12 years in the European Parliament convinces me more and more of what Europe is really all about.

When we were going into Europe, the former Prime Minister's great sell was the veto: nothing could be done unless Britain agreed. That was the great hard sell. Many people thought that within Europe we would have the power of veto. We see today how much that power has been diminished. We will lose more and more as the Maastricht treaty comes into operation.

What amazes me is that some of the things that I have heard, especially from the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) today, are not up to date. A new leaflet has just been published telling us what is really about to happen. I attended the European Parliament last week and I was amazed to see huge posters on every pillar and in every nook and cranny of the Palace of Europe saying:

"European Parliament. Towards a new world partnership."

The EC has lifted its eyes far above the nations of Europe; it is now going to take over the world. Jacques Delors is not thinking in simple European terms; he is thinking in terms of the whole wide world. I shall not weary the House with all the nonsense that is in the new leaflet, but one thing that it says is:

"It is the European Parliament's intention, on the basis of the Community's existing achievements in development co-operation, to initiate a process of fundamental change."

So all that we have been talking about tonight is really in the past. The leaflet continues:

"Thus, through discussion, proposals can be formulated, in the mutual interest of all participants, that would enable Europe to achieve the objectives of its development policy."

There will be a new world order.

In addition, the European Parliament intends to set up in association with the United Nations

"an appeal court representing the conscience of the peoples of the world."

That is the great thinking. Some say that it is a dream. To me, it is more like a nightmare. Super-states and super-powers have always represented a menace to individual nations. The House ought to be aware of current European thinking.

We are being asked tonight to set out seal on the treaty. I willingly pay tribute to the Prime Minister for achieving some damage limitation at Maastricht, but when the treaty is implemented, his achievements will soon be whittled away. At the time of Maastricht, he wrote to me:

"I can assure you that there is no question of my accepting federalism, and I shall continue to negotiate robustly in the interests of the United Kingdom."

I accept that. However, centralism and federalism is at the heart of the treaty. In a press interview, Jacques Delors commented that he wanted to tell our Prime Minister that the word "federal" does not matter. Call it by another name, and then it will be all right. He said:

"The Community is on course to a federal future."

The President of the EC Commission made it perfectly clear what he hopes to achieve.

Some right hon. and hon. Members are critical of the United Kingdom's membership of the Community, but it has a good record. Although other members may boast of being good Europeans, they have not dealt with many vital Single European Act directives. Some that boast loudly and criticise our activities fall far short of being good member states themselves.

The United Kingdom's trouble is that it always keeps to the rules, whereas others do not. When a fishing quota was imposed on the south of Ireland, the southern Government turned a blind eye to it, allowed as many tonnes of fish to be pulled out of the Irish sea as possible, and flooded the market.

I asked the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who happened to be a naval man, whether he could turn a blind eye to fish catches in Northern Ireland. He replied, "No, we keep to the rules. Every fishing boat that takes one fish more than its quota will be prosecuted." And that is what happened. European member states should keep to the European rules. No matter what may be the views of individual right hon. and hon. Members, we should not listen to those who would run down the United Kingdom's role in the Community.

To the south of that part of the United Kingdom in which I live there is the Irish Republic. It receives £3 million a day from Europe, and it will receive £6 million a day under the cohesion fund. Who is to pay for that support? We know perfectly well that Britain and Germany are the paymasters. We have only to look at the figures showing Britain's contribution.

We remember the former Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, going to Europe to demand her money back. It was a good thing that she did get part of it back, because otherwise this country would be in an even more grave financial situation. The official EC budget figures published by the United Kingdom central secretariat show that, in 1990, we lost £2,475 million down the drain. Altogether, we have paid out £15,681 million.

We are financing the European set-up, but are criticised for not being good Europeans. There is an old saying that he who pays the piper calls the tune. It is time that this Parliament placed on record the fact that, as its money is involved, it should have some say in how it is used. I have only to consider how much per head my own country has paid into the Common Market to know—this is borne out by answers to parliamentary questions that I have tabled—that it does not get value for money.

What will happen after the treaty is signed? It will give Jacques Delors and those who share his vision even more impetus to push ahead. We may soon find that we have no control over matters over which we have some influence today, as we did when we entered the Common Market. The talk in Europe is that the European Parliament will be the centre of power, and that the other Parliaments of Europe will serve only as small administrative bodies that will have no say—*[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber is laughing. I know that he has attempted to enter the European Parliament, and perhaps he will do so eventually. I notice that he lost his voice when he came to say something about the Commissioners. When the hon. Gentleman enters the European Parliament, he will learn at first hand what is really happening in Europe, and its attitude to the Parliaments of member states.

We all know that this Parliament has lost power, and that it will lose more. The present European leadership is dead set on introducing the federal concept, which will practically do away with our real decision-making powers. As to the European Court, it always finds in favour of an extension of the powers of the Community. All those matters should concern us when we cast our votes at the end of tonight's debate.

6.49 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): First, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say how pleased I am to see you in the Chair.

The question before us is not whether we are in or out of Europe, or whether we are part of it; of course we are. The question is what sort of Europe we are talking about, and what basis of co-operation will endure. The treaty has been described as a great leap, but I think that it was a great leap in the wrong direction. I know that the words "federal vocation" have been removed; but the people who put those words in the treaty still believe that they should be there, and are determined to get what they want. That is what the debate is about.

I do not think that "federalism" is a very good word. We use it as shorthand for a centralised super-state, but we are really talking more about a unitary state. I think that we use the word "federlism" rather loosely. Some people try to lull us into a sense of false security by telling us that federations push power down to the people and the regions; but what of economic policy? Earlier, I asked the Foreign Secretary whether, under economic and monetary union, there would be any subsidiarity in monetary policy, but he told me to wait for an answer from his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I look forward to hearing that answer.

What we know is that all the most important powers—the bread-and-butter powers relating to taxing, spending and borrowing—are to be removed from us, and to be raised to Brussels level. The public do not want that: there are large majorities in this country against ceding more powers to Brussels, and large majorities against a single currency.

There seems to be what the psychiatrists call a role reversal in the House. The Conservatives tend to move in a crabwise direction, but they appear to be saying, "We do not want to give away too many powers; we want to decentralise." Labour, meanwhile, seems to be saying—at least from its Front Bench—"Give more powers, and do it more quickly." I am not sure how that came about, but I believe that we, as Members of Parliament, have no right or mandate to surrender the essentials of self-government.

We have no right or mandate to transfer the economic, political and legislative powers of the British people to EC institutions without the consent and agreement of the electorate. What we are really talking about is democracy. It is proposed that most of the important decisions—according to Jacques Delors, 80 per cent. of our economic and social policy—should be decided in the Community, by people whom we do not elect and cannot remove.

Of course, the treaties that we are discussing are not the end of the matter. There is another inter-governmental conference lined up for 1996, and that will mean another big pull on the ratchet. We know—Jacques Delors has said it in public—that the Commission wants a new executive. Delors wants to change the institutions; he wants a sort of putative Government. That is being kept on ice at present, because a referendum is to take place in Denmark on 2 June. What the Commission wants, however, is the centralising of power in the executive.

We know the destination of this train. We know the aim and intention: it is the creation of a super-state. The question is, do we want that? If we do not want it, it is about time we said so. We should get rid of all the "here and there" and all the ambiguity; our Parliament should be absolutely clear that that is not what it wants.

What I find most objectionable and worrying is the question of economic and monetary union. The treaty includes a timetable—a very short timetable and, in my view, a very unrealistic one. We know that the fashions of

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

economic theory come and go. At Maastricht, however, the drafters took the tenets of a particular economic theory —Euro-monetarism—and entrenched those tenets by enshrining them in a treaty that is supposed to endure for all time.

I hear that someone has written a book called "The End of History". This seems to be the end of economics; certainly it is supposed to be the end of debate and discussion about economics. With what I consider breathtaking arrogance, people purport to have devised a blueprint for the future of the continent—or, at least, for half the continent—which is to be put into a monetary straitjacket with permanent deflation. We shall all suffer; there will be hard labour. The objective is to squeeze all of us into a single currency run by an unelected, unaccountable central bank.

I have no doubt that the Father of the House—the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who spoke so eloquently—feels able to support the idea of a community run by bankers. What I do not understand is how those of us who are on the left—members of the Labour party—can support the idea that all our economic policy should be run by an unaccountable central bank.

When stage 1, the exchange rate mechanism, first came up, Labour considered it and laid down four conditions. None of those conditions was met, but—inexplicably—Labour nevertheless accepted and supported ERM entry. I do not wish to be over-rhetorical or to provoke hon. Members, but let me ask this: has anyone observed any benefits resulting from our joining the ERM? Unemployment has risen by 1 million; the economy has not grown, but has shrunk by 2·5 per cent.; investment in the economy is falling. Now we are going to move on: we are coming to the second and third stages.

What does the Labour party say about that? Before Maastricht, Labour issued a statement in the name of the national executive committee. That statement, issued on 29 November 1991, laid down the conditions for convergence that the NEC believed should apply. The treaty said that the objective of the bank was price stability; the criteria are entirely monetary, exactly like those of the Bundesbank. According to Labour, however, that was not enough. Labour said that there must be real convergence: it was necessary to deal with growth and employment.

I agreed with everything that the Labour party said in its statement. The point is that none of that is in the treaties. That being the case, I do not see how we can possibly do other than vote against the treaty. Let me quote a couple of sentences from the NEC document:

"Unfortunately, the Commission and the British Government have concentrated only on the need for nominal convergence, i.e. convergence in the rate of inflation and in interest rates. This is incomplete and unsatisfactory."

If it is unsatisfactory, why should we not vote against it?

The document continues:

"As British experience demonstrates today, it is possible to attain some convergence in inflation and in interest rates between Britain and Germany, but only in circumstances in which the Germany economy is growing at 3·5 per cent. a year and the British economy is shrinking by 2·5 per cent. a year. This Tory policy of convergence by recession is totally unacceptable."

If it is totally unacceptable, will someone please tell me why we should not vote against it?

According to the document, without the conditions that it has laid down,

"convergence of inflation rates and interest rates can be attained only by recession."

That is the Labour party's document, not mine, but I agree with it. If that is the case, I am minded to vote against the Bill; I do not want recession.

The document also says that we must have a strong regional policy on the scale and pattern of transfers involved in national monetary union. There is none of that in the treaty. How on earth can we abstain?

The clock will start ticking away in January 1994. Then we shall start to find out whether countries can join, initially by 1997. We shall have to abandon control of the Bank of England; that is part of it. I do not know how the Labour party will vote for such a development. Clem Attlee, in the post-war Labour Government—knowing what Montague Norman had done for economic policy —said that we would never have that again. We would not allow bankers to run our affairs; it would be nationalised and placed under democratic political control.

We shall be asked to vote for a Bill to end the nationalisation of the Bank of England. I do not know how we can do that. Clem Attlee must be turning in his grave. The central bank would issue the currency and control monetary policy. There would be one interest rate. There is no subsidiarity in monetary policy. There would be one short-term interest rate in Glasgow, Berlin, Lisbon and Naples. That is crazy. Where is the flexibility?

Germany's problem is inflation. Here it is recession. We need different interest rates. Even an O-level or A-level economics student would surely know that. The central bank is to be even more independent than the Bundesbank. At least the Bundesbank has a Government breathing down its neck, as we saw with reunification. The central bank, though, will have no Government breathing down its neck and will be beyond any democratic control. The people who run the bank will be in situ for eight years —much longer than we are elected for. Nobody can remove them. They will have more power than the politicians.

I shall not run through all the criteria, but the one that upsets me is that the planned or actual central Government deficit—the public sector borrowing requirement—must be no nore than 3 per cent. of gross domestic product. Under a Conservative Government, what is the GDP percentage of our PSBR now? It is 4·5 per cent., and rising. It is nearly 5 per cent. If we were under that regime, we should have to cut our PSBR and the automatic stabilisers. We should prolong the recession and make everything worse in this country.

That is what monetarists propose, but I do not understand how the Labout party can support that proposition. There is nothing about growth in the criteria. As with the Queen's Speech, there is no mention of unemployment in the criteria. Unemployment does not seem to matter these days. It does not matter whether there are 1 million, 2 million, 3 million or 4 million people without jobs. They do not get a mention, either in the Queen's Speech or in the criteria. It would mark an historic break with everything that the Labour party has believed in—all the things that brought most of my hon. Friends and I and people such as Clem Attlee into the Labour party.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) agrees. I am a great fan of his. He

writes articles for *Tribune*. Conservative Members probably do not read *Tribune*. I am sorry if they form an audience for a discussion within the Labour party, but in other European debates it is the other way round. We are having a democratic debate on these issues. My hon. Friend, in his article in *Tribune*, referred to the draft of the treaty and said:

"This quite simply isn't on. We must not allow the European Right to institutionalise monetarism in this way. Economic and monetary union should facilitate growth, not enshrine deflation."

My hon. Friend is an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman. If he believes that, I should have thought that he ought to vote against the Bill.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) made a speech in this House in November last year in which he said:

"The Labour party has argued consistently for the bank to operate in a stronger framework of political accountability than the present draft treaty proposes."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 50.]

If the treaty is wrong and is not what we want, why on earth are we not voting against it? We are abstaining. We are saying that we do not have a view, that we do not know, that we cannot make up our minds. What am I supposed to do? When I go back to my constituency and my constituents ask me what the Labour party thinks about this, what shall I say to them? I shall have to tell them that we do not know.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I think that it ought to be made absolutely clear that what my hon. Friend has just said is not the case. The Opposition have tabled a reasoned amendment that deals with a number of the points that he raised. Therefore, my hon. Friend can go back to his constituents and say that that is what we believe in. That reasoned amendment was tabled by the Labour party after three discussions in the parliamentary Labour party, most of which he participated in.

Mr. Leighton: We must not talk about our private meetings. No vote was taken at those meetings. The majority of those who spoke agreed with my point of view. My hon. Friend is always helpful to me. He has given me some advice. If, therefore, I go back to my constituents and say, "We didn't agree with any of this, so we put down a reasoned amendment," they will ask me what happened to it. I should have to tell them that we lost it. Then they would ask, "What did you do then? Did you vote against the motion to which you put down the reasoned amendment?" I should then have to tell them, "We couldn't make up our minds." That is not good enough, is it?

When we say that we are being 200 per cent. communautaire and that the Conservatives are not ceding powers quickly enough, I do not think that that wins us any medals. It did not do so at the last election. That is not a good enough explanation for me to give to my constituents.

Most of the treaty is old hat. It is outdated; it is outmoded. It was drawn up before the Berlin wall came down and before the collapse of communism in the east. Those new democracies are struggling to find their feet. The Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, said openly and honestly—he is one of the few Members who has always been open and honest—that the treaty means that we should have to give up passport control at frontiers. He said that that was clear in 1972. He also said that Poland, Bulgaria, Russia, and Czechoslovakia could not become members of the Community. That is wrong.

We have a great historic opportunity to unite the whole of Europe, but we cannot do it on the basis of this treaty—on the basis of economic and monetary union, with these financial criteria. If the pound is going to be in difficulties under economic and monetary union, what would happen to the lev, the zloti or the rouble? We are raising new economic barriers when the political barriers are coming down. We are turning our back on central and eastern Europe, on Russia and the ex-Soviet countries. Why on earth are we doing that? What is the advantage? I do not understand it, I cannot vote for it, and I shall not do so tonight.

7.6 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): In my brief speech I shall comment specifically on home affairs matters. I shall not follow the line of the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). I shall support the Government in the Aye Lobby.

Co-operation at European level in the home affairs field, especially in the fight against serious crime and in the prevention of illegal immigration, is highly desirable. That is something that the Home Affairs Select Committee has looked at in a variety of contexts. I refer to its reports on practical police co-operation, hard drugs, policing football hooliganism, safety and security on the channel tunnel, and its aborted work on external frontier controls. These are but examples. I very much hope that when the Select Committees are re-established the Committee may think it appropriate to look again at the question of external frontier controls.

Co-operation does not, however, necessarily mean that the lowest common denominator has to be sought. A good illustration of that is the desirability of maintaining border checks at British ports and airports. Why sacrifice the advantages of being an island in the interests of a piece of Euro-dogma? I very much support the thoughtful and clear speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker).

The provisions on co-operation in the spheres of justice and home affairs in the Maastricht treaty are to be thoroughly welcomed. Some of their implications are explained in the Government's evidence, which is referred to on the Order Paper as relevant to today's debate.

The provisions give no new powers of initiative to the Commission on judicial co-operation in criminal matters, or policy co-operation in fighting international crime and terrorism. The European institutions—I refer specifically to the Commission, the European Parliament and the European Court—have new rights in some areas, particularly policy on asylum, frontiers, visas, drug addiction and fraud, but with the exception of visas, the rights of individual member states are fully safeguarded.

I believe that to be correct. The tasks performed by the Home Office and other agents of the system of justice are perhaps the most important manifestations of sovereignty, but I have several specific questions to ask. I appreciate that Ministers may not be able to answer them tonight, but I should appreciate a letter, in the near future, a copy of which could perhaps be sent to the Library.

[Sir John Wheeler]

When is Europol, as envisaged in article A9, likely to be established? How will the growing co-ordination between member states be monitored and the growth of ad hoc groups kept under control? How will reports be made to domestic Parliaments? Under article G of the title, it is envisaged that bilateral co-operation in matters relating to home affairs will continue—is that regarded as likely to be more or less important than Communitywide co-operation?

When are the common visa lists and the common visa format likely to be in place? Are any difficulties being encountered? Are all member states as competent as the United Kingdom in the control of the issue of visas? They are very important questions, and they represent the detail to which the House must be privy and which it must play a part in deciding. There are a number of important issues on which national Parliaments and national Governments should be responsible for making decisions, and I have mentioned some of them.

I welcome the establishment of Europol, provided that it is used as a clearing house for information and does not have operational powers because the best way forward is for the 12 existing member countries and any prospective new member countries to be better equipped to respond to organised or cross-border crime and for there to be better co-ordination but no central direction.

I especially welcome the fact that, when the United Kingdom assumes the presidency of the Commission in a few weeks' time, it will concentrate on four initiatives in respect of home affairs—improving information gathering on terrorist incidents, greater harmonisation of radio communications, increased fingerprint recognition, and developing information on cross-border crime.

On increased fingerprint recognition, we had better put our own house in order as each of the United Kingdom's 52 police forces are seeking automated fingerprint retrieval systems, some of which may not be compatible with each other. Before we consider Europe, we had better make certain that our arrangements are as effective as they should be.

I believe that those arrangements arise better within the work of the Trevi group, although we should not ignore the important contribution to be made within the European section of Interpol and we should continue to monitor the progress of the Schengen agreement. I am concerned that there are, in effect, three intelligence-gathering institutions in Europe—Trevi, Schengen and Interpol. At some point in the fairly near future, we shall have to decide which structure the United Kingdom police system is to regard as the lead organisation.

However, I assert the general principle that police forces and police systems work best together when they work directly together. In any event, the often sharp differences between the two United Kingdom legal systems and those of continental Europe make a general approach to judicial arrangements most unlikely for some time to come.

A further illustration of the importance of subsidiarity in the treaty is the need to maintain our 700-year-old legislation which helps to fight crime through the hallmarking of gold, silver and platinum articles. The system of hallmarking was introduced in 1300 in the reign of Edward I and is one of the oldest forms of consumer protection in existence. That could all change if the European Commission refuses to recognise the value of compulsory hallmarking because it maintains that all member states already protect consumers against false markings and therefore sees no need for an obligatory mark. I do not believe that the Commission has the evidence for such a contention, but our compulsory system of hallmarking has benefited the consumer. I assert that the assay offices fulfil a valuable function which should be allowed to continue.

I conclude on an important practical point about the currency, which will be of particular interest to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. As we know, it is for Parliament to decide whether the United Kingdom should opt to participate in a single European currency. Should that course be taken, however, it will be essential to consider in detail and well in advance the practicalities of changing to a new currency.

The experience of decimalisation in 1971 suggests that the changeover will take a long time to implement even once the decision to adopt a common currency has been made. I want the Government to confirm that the Queen's head would remain on the obverse of our coins and on the bank notes and that we would maintain our own designs on the reverse.

7.16 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I do not know whether "humbug" is a communautaire word, but there has certainly been a fair bit of it on display in the past 24 hours. The tone was set by the Prime Minister's introductory speech yesterday, when he claimed that the Maastricht agreement was an enormous success. I could have understood if he had been talking about success in terms of the Tory party's internal management—an attempt to persuade the more naive and gullible Tory Back Benchers that nothing much was happening and postponing the day of decision until after the general election. However, that was not what the Prime Minister was arguing—he was claiming it as a success for the rest of Europe. He argued that the failure to agree certain extended powers for the European Community represented a success for the whole of Europe, which was a quite remarkable argument.

From a European perspective, one can regard Maastricht as an achievement or as a disappointment—a report for the European Parliament regards it as a bit of both. One can regard it as either, but one cannot regard it as a success in the matters in which it was a failure. The Prime Minister should learn to separate what is regarded as an achievement to satiate the appetites of the little Englanders on his Back Benchers from what could be recognised as an achievement in the wider interests of the European Community.

Humbug is not restricted to the Tory party—we also heard a fair amount from the Labour party. I was fascinated by the speech of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who cleverly argued that the social chapter was very important. He said that the Labour party had tabled a good amendment, which the SNP will be more than willing to support, but he went on to argue that, once the amendment had failed—as it almost certainly will—the Labour party's position would be to do nothing.

That is remarkable, because the right hon. Gentleman made a very good case for voting for the principle of the Bill but then went on to make a case for voting against the principal of the Bill. The one argument that he did not successfully make was that for abstention——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Salmond: No, I shall not give way, because I have only 10 minutes. The hon. Gentleman and his party have had more than enough time in the past 24 hours.

The negotiations are over, for better or for worse—I think for worse. If the amendment fails, we come to a vote on the principle. One can be either for it or against it, but one cannot sit on one's hands and claim that the matter can be resolved by abstention—even the Labour party has to have a view on this issue.

It is also a bad idea even in terms of internal party management. If the Labour party had decided to vote for or against the Bill, it would no doubt have split two ways. In fact, tonight in the Lobbies, it will split three ways. As a technique of internal party management that displays incompetence.

The sub plot of the debate is how much power will be transferred from this place to the European Parliament. The technique adopted by those on the Government Front Bench has been to pretend to their Back Benchers that not all that much is happening. That argument is not sustainable. So far, the anti-Europeans have carried the argument by demonstrating that the Maastricht agreement and the Bill transfer real powers from this place to the European Parliament.

If hon. Members are in favour of keeping the powers in this place, they should vote against the Bill. If, like me, they think that the removal of powers from this place is not a bad idea, they will be sympathetic to the Bill. I admit that I am attracted by the idea—I make no secret of it—of this place losing powers to the European Parliament, to European institutions and to the people of Scotland. I want to see the Parliament of Westminster squeezed between those two elements. I shall certainly vote for the Bill.

We should not accept the elaborate pretences that have been engaged in by those on the Government Front Bench to the effect that the Bill will change nothing much and that—this is even more fantastic—that the Prime Minister, single-handed, has transformed the direction of the European Community from the rather nasty "F" word "federalism", to the nicer "S" word "subsidiarity". Such pretences are insulting to the intelligence of Conservative Back Benchers—if, like military intelligence, that is not a contradiction in terms.

The anti-Europeans have made a reasonable case in some of their arguments. They are right to be cautious about the implications of economic and monetary union. The irrevocable linking of exchange rates will create major problems. Currencies will have to level out and converge to an extent that goes beyond the financial indicators in the Maastricht agreement. There will also have to be substantial fiscal transfers, which will, I suspect, go beyond the amount in the cohesion fund, also set out in the Maastricht agreement.

However, that problem will not be solved by the Government's opt-out clause. If, in 1997 or after, Europe decides that a single currency cannot be sustained, whatever is in the agreement, the Government's opt-out will become irrelevant. If Europe decides to move ahead and believes that the single currency can be sustained, the Government's position will become untenable, because sterling would have to be umbilically linked to the single currency used elsewhere in Europe. There is no doubt about that.

However, I find the idea that we should fly a flag for economic management, as carried out in the state of the United Kingdom, quite fantastic. In the 1980s, we had two recessions that were arguably created, and certainly made much worse, by the mismanagement of economic and monetary policy within the state of the United Kingdom. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) actually argued that people will take to the streets to defend the right of the Chancellor, the Bank of England or the Treasury to continue to mismanage the United Kingdom economy. I could well see that people would take to the streets to demand the removal of those such as Chancellor Howe or Chancellor Lawson, but I do not see people rushing to the barricades to protect their powers.

The Government's argument is at its shabbiest on the social chapter. The Leader of the Opposition was correct to point out that the dragons that the Prime Minister seeks to slay in the social chapter do not exist. The social chapter is about health and safety, working conditions, providing information to workers and equality between men and women. The only employment that will be protected by the opt-out from the social chapter will be that of lawyers who will have to interpret which areas of social policy are in the treaty of Rome or covered by the Single European Act and which are excluded by the opt-out clause to the social chapter.

It is most insulting to argue that the only way in which the United Kingdom can prosper is for it to have the worst employment conditions in the whole of Europe. That would entrench a cycle of decline, of low productivity, low wages and low skills, instead of creating a virtuous cycle of high wages and high productivity in a highly skilled economy.

It is in the incredible application of the principle of subsidiarity that the Government's greatest hypocrisy is displayed. Subsidiarity has been seized upon as the great principle that makes the Maastricht agreement suddenly acceptable to the Conservative party. Just as the Conservative party believes that charity begins at home, so it believes that subsidiarity stops at home—or at least, in the Westminster Parliament.

The Prime Minister—with the full authority of the Conservative party which speaks for 25 per cent. of the people in Scotland compared with the Scottish National party, which now speaks for 22 per cent.—told me yesterday that my party's views had been rejected by the Scottish electorate. He fails to recognise that it is the Westminster Parliament which is held in disrepute in Scotland.

When we consider the Maastricht agreement from the Scottish perspective, we see that the Government have rejected the social policy through its opt-out clause, when Scotland would have wished to endorse the social chapter. The Government have opted out of the process of economic and monetary union, when Scotland would have wanted to engage in the argument for bringing the Eurofed to our capital city, Edinburgh, and to enter the debate on extending the cohesion fund. We now hear the extraordinary argument that subsidiarity means power for Westminster, but none for anywhere else.

[Mr. Salmond]

It is time to stop Scotland being misgoverned and misrepresented in Europe. We need real government and real representation in the European Community. The Prime Minister suggests that up to 20 states could be members of the Community by the end of the century. The ancient nation of Scotland will be a full part of that process as an independent state.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Member's time is up.

7.26 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Many of my hon. Friends, and other hon. Members, may be enthusiastic about the European ideal, but they have become nervous about the steady accretion of power to the centre in the European Community. It seems to have become an inexorable process for the Commission to find ways to extend its competence, ways that we did not always imagine were possible when we approved treaties in the House.

A good example of that process is the 48-hour week currently being proposed. We thought that that would be subject to unanimity, but apparently it is to be dealt with under health and safety provisions. We thought that frontier controls were subject to the Luxembourg agreement and that member states would be able to retain them, but we are not told that supplements to treaties that were formally signed do not mean anything at all even though their preambles may mean everything. That is cause for considerable concern to hon. Members. If we are to sign another treaty, we need to be sure that we will not be subject to further accretions of power to the centre which we did not envisage at the time of signing.

The other issue of concern is our budget contributions. Again what we thought we had agreed is being attacked. The remedy to that problem is not for us to have to fight for the rebate that we gained under Mrs. Thatcher, but a thorough-going review of the whole system of budgetary contributions. It is absolutely crazy that only two countries—Britain and Germany—have been net contributors to the Community budget when the others, some of whom enjoy high standards of living, have been net recipients. The whole basis of budgetary contributions needs to be renegotiated.

It may be to Britain's advantage to make common cause with Germany to ensure that the other wealthy countries of the Community make a fair contribution. It has been said that Germany wishes to dominate Europe, but there is no evidence of that. On the contrary, the thrust of German policy has been to subsume its national identity and to gain a European indentity. That is why Germany has been so eager to push us into ever greater union with our Community partners. It has been prepared to pay a heavy price for that in terms of its budgetary contributions.

I am reassured by the treaty because, for the first time, there are changes in the Community's view that everything needs to be centralised. For the first time, alternatives to increasing centralisation are built into the treaty. There are three principal alternatives. First, not all states are required to follow the same path. For example, we can agree or disagree about when or whether to join monetary union and we have decided that we will not be part of the social chapter. Whether hon. Members think that that is good or bad in itself, it must be good that not all members have to agree to everything and follow the centralising path.

Secondly, matters relating to European union do not have to be subject to the competence of the treaties, the Commission and the European Court of Justice. For example, Home Office policies, policies on policing, foreign affairs and defence are now subject to entirely separate agreements between the Governments of member states. That is an encouraging precedent.

Thirdly, there is the principle of subsidiarity under which the interests of member states are paramount. Only if matters cannot be satisfied by the member state are they passed up to the level of the Community. Again, that gives us grounds for optimism. I would prefer it if disputes on subsidiarity were not to be settled by the European Court of Justice. There should be some other body, perhaps a senate of the Parliaments of member states, that would settle such disputes. I believe that that would be more likely to uphold the rights of member states. However, that is for another treaty at another time.

If we are enthusiastic about the new approach, we need to demonstrate that it can be progressed efficaciously. On monetary union we must adopt a rigorous approach to reduce inflation, to improve the elimination of budget deficits and to converge the economies of the Community. However, the latter will become extremely difficult, and I doubt whether it will be possible to achieve it in the time scale suggested in the treaty.

We must take the initiative on cross-border policing, on co-operation between police forces, on hot pursuit and on the competence of courts. There must not be a haven for terrorists or criminals simply by crossing Community borders. On defence, we must act to promote the Western European Union as the European arm of NATO. On foreign affairs we must be much more active in securing joint action when we need to act in crises. Our initial behaviour in the Gulf crisis was poor.

In Yugoslavia, we have been tardy in responding to an enormous crisis. We have been slow in condemning Slobodan Milosevic for the appalling policies that he has pursued in Serbia and the aggression that he has pursued in the other states of the former Yugoslavia. As I am speaking, Sarajevo is under siege. It is defenceless and is being shelled by guns from the former Yugoslav army. We are doing nothing about it. When we are asked for assistance by the democratically elected president of Bosnia, we should provide it. If he needs arms to defend himself, he should get them.

We must ensure that the advances and the new approach being made in the treaty will be enshrined for the future. Only by having the flexibility that is inherent in the Maastricht treaty will we be able to accommodate the expansion of the Community that so many of us wish to see. If we are to take in different states with different traditions and problems, we cannot afford to be hidebound as we have been in the past. The new approach offers great encouragement to those states. Indeed, I believe that it is the reason why some states, such as Switzerland, that have held back in the past now feel able to put themselves forward as members. They see that there is now a flexibility that was not there before. It is entirely appropriate that that flexibility should exist when so many of the emerging democracies in eastern Europe urgently require our assistance.

7.35 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I agree with all those who have spoken today that we are in Europe to stay. I part company with some, particularly the Father of the House and ex-Prime Minister and even some of my hon. Friends, because I see a different Europe from that which they often portray. I see a Europe of states which look after their own interests. I do not see the vast corporation that is sometimes described. I realise that we are in Europe to stay because in 1986 we went into the single European market.

We hear hypocrisy and cant from the ex-Prime Minister, the countess of Finchley, and an ex-Member of the House, Norman Tebbit. They now violently oppose what is happening in Europe, yet they voted for the single European market. The ex-Prime Minister called on the Whips to ensure that people went into the Lobby and also applied the guillotine to the debate.

Obviously, once the single European market is accepted, if we are to have the full benefits, a single European currency and central bank follow as night follows day. Yesterday, the Prime Minister tried to pretend that somehow we would not have to accept a single European currency. That is so far removed from reality as to be almost laughable.

The present Prime Minister and the ex-Prime Minister, the countess, took us into the exchange rate mechanism. They took us in at the wrong time, for the wrong reason and at the wrong level. The level is making British industry increasingly uncompetitive and needs at least a 20 per cent. realignment. We are not doing anything about that. The rest of our European partners are moving towards a European currency and a European bank. Once more, it will not be a matter of whether we join but of when we join. On the other precedents which must be taken into account, I am sure that the terms will be detrimental to the country.

I see the new Economic Secretary on the Treasury Bench. I congratulate him on his appointment. We know each other from debates on City affairs. I must tell him that because of the opt-out clause we have lost any chance of having the European central bank located in Britain.

The Labour party is right to say that there cannot be this convergence without other conditions being met. We outline those conditions in our amendment. There must be a balanced development so that we do not have one country which is far ahead of the others, as is the case with Germany now. We must all have a high level of growth and there must be a high level of employment and prosperity in the regions. Agreeing to convergence on any other terms would be a disaster.

To pretend that there will not be a common currency is to avoid reality. We already have a single European currency and a single European bank—the deutschmark and the Bundesbank. We have little freedom of action. If the Germans decided to increase interest rates tomorrow, despite the fact that we are in a recession we would have to do the same.

I heard the Prime Minister talking yesterday about decentralisation. What a load of poppycock. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), whom I warmly welcome to the House, asked the Foreign Secretary whether elected members of local authorities would be allowed to sit on the committee that will be created by article 198 of the Maastricht treaty and whether there would be decentralisation. He did not get an answer. Members of the committee will be Government appointees. As we have seen with hospital trusts, they will be Tory foot soldiers rather than elected representatives. We can forget any talk of decentralisation.

I do not want impossible terms to prevent other countries from joining the Community. As a supporter of the European Free Trade Association, I look forward to the day when Sweden, Finland, Austria and Switzerland join the Community. They should set the pattern for other countries to join.

The one thing on which I agreed with the Father of the House—I was pleased to hear a Conservative say this—was the lack of the social chapter. He said that we shall become—indeed, I would say that we are—the sweatshop of Europe. There is no protection for labour, but complete freedom for capital to do as it likes. Nothing has been done for health and safety or for employment. We are still arguing about a 48-hour working week. What kind of country have we become under the Conservatives since 1979? It is certainly nothing to be proud of. We pretend that we cannot afford to implement the social chapter, but poorer nations in Europe are doing so. That is a disgrace.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) spoke against the treaty in its present form. It appears to me that the only logical position for me to take—and many of my colleagues will join me—is to vote against the treaty. I certainly do not think that we can abstain. If we do not vote against the treaty, not only shall we never forgive ourselves: we shall not be forgiven by the people of this country.

7.44 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): It was appropriate that, before the debate, we heard a brilliant welcome from the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary for the fantastic progress that has been made today in reforming the common agricultural policy. We now have some of the details, although they have not been finalised yet. A dramatic cut has been made in the guaranteed price for cereals of £31 per tonne. A special subsidy for cereals of £32 per tonne has also been agreed. The result is that the extra cost to the CAP will be £3·28 billion, on top of the £28 billion that is already being spent.

I mention this to show that, in all EC affairs, some people have been daydreaming. If we consider agriculture, despite what has been said about stabilisers, quotas and set-aside, the danger is that, despite what the treaty says, some Members are being taken to the cleaners time after time. I accept that a few of us were taken in to some extent and were impressed by the great advances of Maastricht. I was taken in and, as a gesture, for the first time in 20 years did not vote against the Government on an EC issue.

Subsidiarity is mentioned in the treaty. Will it safeguard rights for people? Under the treaty, nothing is guaranteed. Subsidiarity will apply only where the EC does not already have priority and power. The international agreements apply only to new areas of policy. The social opt-out, about which the Labour party is making a great deal of fuss, is just ridiculous. Everything covered by the social chapter is already covered by the Single European Act and the Commission is shoving through the directives one by one under the majority voting system. Even if the opting out of currency and stage 3 were to happen and Britain were linked in the narrow band to a central European currency, the freedom that we would have is the same

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freedom that the Scots have with the Scottish pound note. There is no freedom from central economic bureaucratic planning.

I warn my hon. Friends not to be misled, as we have been so often, by assurances. We were assured during the passage of the Single European Act that our powers of immigration were secure. We are now being taken to the European Court, and after 1 January our powers will almost certainly fade away.

I hope that hon. Members will consider what the treaty does. Has it extended the powers of the Community? Mr. Michael White of *The Guardian* answered that question today. In a brilliant exercise, he identified 11 areas of policy where majority voting will apply—visas, youth training, trans-European networks, telecommunications, distortion of industrial competitiveness, health, education, cultural measures, third-world development, consumer protection and cohesion. Majority voting will apply to vast new areas.

I appeal to socialists who want to do something for people—and to Scottish Members in particular—to read article 107 and to ask themselves how they can tell their constituents that they are going to fight for socialist economic policies. The article mentions the European central bank and says that no such body

"shall seek or take instructions from Community institutions or bodies, from any government of a Member State or from any other body. The Community institutions and bodies and"

Members of Parliament and Governments undertake to respect this principle.

Members of Parliament, Governments and even Community institutions will therefore be powerless to act on the public sector borrowing requirement, interest rates and other instruments that some people would like to use to make the rights and duties of working people better and to improve society in some way. It will all be run by central bankers. Let us hope that they will be nice central bankers and that they will do the right things. I ask Labour Members, what if those bankers create massive unemployment and misery? What on earth can Members of Parliament do? What are we elected for? I ask Conservative Members the same question. We believe in things, but if we have a central bank and it creates socialist nonsense and mass unemployment, what could we as elected Members of Parliament do? In Britain, if a Government make a mess of things, at least we can do something about it. People can chuck the Government out, or warn them at a by-election. What will we be able to do when all economic policy is being run by a central bank staffed by people appointed for eight years?

I ask hon. Members to think about what we are doing. We are told to comfort ourselves by saying, "We oppose a federal Europe." But why do we oppose a federal Europe? It would be infinitely better than what we are creating under the Maastricht treaty. At least with a federal Europe some things would belong to us—to our Parliament and our people. Under Maastricht, as under previous arrangements, nothing belongs to us. Under the treaties, almost every political and economic activity can fall within the powers of the EC.

I appeal to the Government not to say that they are against a federal Europe, because a federal Europe would be infinitely better than what was created in Maastricht. If hon. Members read the treaty they will know that it creates a unitary state, in which every person in Britain—including the Queen, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and all of us—will be a citizen of a European union. Some people may laugh at that idea, and say, "What does it matter?" But when the rights, duties and obligations of citizens are determined by the Council of Ministers, it will matter a great deal.

The next factor is education. Like many other hon. Members, I have children at school. Under article 126, education will have to be changed to give it a European identity. Some hon. Members may laugh at that idea, but it is not so funny. I should like to think that our kids will be educated from a world perspective, thinking in terms of areas of the world such as the far east, and others. To say that everything, including—under article 128—culture, should be linked to a European identity, seems wrong in principle. Surely the content of education should be fixed by Governments, local authorities and parents, not determined by the EC.

I appeal to hon. Members to think of what is happening to our costs. We say that we are worried about money. We say that we spend too much money. Conservatives want to save money. Yet so many areas of activity are covered, including the cohesion fund—which will turn out to be another common agricultural policy. Even though we say that we might not join stage 3, we shall still have to pay for it. I am sure that the Foreign Secretary will be kind, as he always is, and confirm the facts. Although we are not signing up, and say that we shall not join, we shall still have to pay money. The cohesion fund will be a mighty fund. Billions of pounds will pour out, and, as usual, Britain will have to pay a substantial share.

I do not wish to take up too much of hon. Members' time, but I ask them to remember that when—because of the actions that we take now, time after time—democracy is dying, at some stage people will wake up and realise that our power to do anything is fading away. They will be terribly angry. We must ask ourselves, "What should we do?" I ask anyone who intends to vote for the treaty tonight what good they think it will do for Britain. Can they think of any aspect, any article, in the treaty which will make things better for Britain and its people, for its economy, for democracy or for anything else?

Sadly, what we see now is more and more centralisation, more majority voting and more expenditure on waste and extravagance. Even elections are being interfered with. Under article 107d there will be uniform arrangements for the European elections. On the environment, too, our powers are not great. Anything done to protect human health comes under EC arrangements.

At some stage we must ask ourselves, "Is this really the EC that we asked people to join?" At the time of the referendum, we said to people, "Don't worry—your powers will be okay; your Government are still in charge; democracy is okay; all that we are joining is a free-trade area." But what have we joined? We have joined a centralised unitary state, and at some stage we shall have to ask the people, "Do you want to go this way, or do you not?"

What we shall have to do——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.55 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I intend to vote for the reasoned amendment and then to vote against the Bill. I shall do so with some difficulty, and have given the matter a great deal of thought—my decision required me to resign a Front-Bench position which I had held for several years. However, I must judge the action that I take tonight in the light of several factors. I have done so, and found that what I intend to do was the only honourable course of action open to me.

A few weeks ago, all Labour Members fought a general election on a specific policy, and I shall remind my hon. Friends, and any Conservative Members who are interested, what we said in the manifesto on which we fought that election:

"We shall play an active part in negotiations on Economic and Monetary Union. We shall fight for Britain's interests, working for Europe-wide policies to fight unemployment and to enhance regional and structural industrial policy. The elected finance ministers of the different countries must become the effective political counterpart to the central bank whose headquarters should be in Britain."

I stand by that. I was happy to fight the general election on it.

There is a wide divergence between the provisions of the Bill and what we said in our manifesto. Before discussing that in more detail, I shall spend a few moments explaining the reasons why I shall go through the No Lobby tonight —perhaps by telling the House about some hon. Members with whom I do not share a common view.

First, I shall not be making common cause with those few hon. Members in the dark recesses of the Conservative party who will go through the No Lobby for scarcely concealed racist reasons. I shall not share a platform or a vote with them. My reasons will be completely different from theirs.

Secondly, although I hold my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) in great esteem, I shall not go all the way along his road. I listened carefully to his speech, and I must say that I enjoyed that speech rather more in 1975 than I did yesterday. Nor will I be going into the No Lobby for the same reasons as will my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who seems still to be fighting world war two—in his head, if not on the ground.

That leaves me in a somewhat isolated position—although I suspect that many of my hon. Friends may share some of my views. I arrive at my conclusion, having supported the paragraph from the Labour manifesto which I quoted earlier, because I cannot see anything for my constituents in the Bill as it stands, given that it omits the social chapter. That left me in severe difficulty.

I shall explain why I feel strongly on the subject. I shall not argue about which constituency is the most deprived —that is a futile argument—but I represent a constituency that still has not recovered from the recession caused by the Conservative Government of the 1980s. In my constituency there are generations who have grown up and have their own teenage children, yet who have never worked—they have never known the opportunity for a job. Without the social option or the social protocol, there is nothing in the Bill for those people.

Many people in my constituency live on benefits. Many elderly people live on the bare minimum of a pension topped up by income support. Without the social option, there is nothing in the Bill for them. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broad Green (Mr. Kennedy) will understand when I say that many people in my constituency who are in employment nevertheless have low pay—and there is nothing in the Bill for them, either. On balance, in representing what I perceive to be the strong interests of my constituents, I cannot in all conscience abstain tonight, but must go through the Lobby against the Bill.

I will support the reasoned amendment because it is a good amendment. It reflects very much the style of argument and, in some respects, the points on which we fought the general election a few weeks ago. I am happy to support the amendment, but I cannot support the Bill.

The Government refuse to recognise the extent to which our position within the exchange rate mechanism is prolonging the recession. That also has profound effects on my constituents and on their prospects of obtaining employment or economic justice. I had fond hopes that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the shadow Chancellor, would be the Chancellor now and that he would be in the process of negotiating a realignment within the ERM. That was not to be. The Government have shown no eagerness or thought to move in that direction.

No economic justice looms. There is no path out of the recession for my constituents or for many millions of others. We know that 2·75 million people are registered in the official statistics as unemployed. In my own constituency and in the neighbouring constituency of Knowsley, South, more than 12,000 people are unemployed. The Bill offers them no hope.

With some sadness, but with the satisfaction that I am doing the right thing, I will not go along with my Whip tonight. I do not say that as one of life's natural rebels. I have been in the House for almost six years and I have not broken the Whip previously. Before that, I spent 14 years as a Labour member of a local authority and I cannot recall one occasion on which I broke a whip. For the important reasons I have described, I will go through the Lobby tonight with some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, although my reasons for doing so may be different from theirs. My reasons are certainly different from those of some Conservative Members. I will go through the Lobby for what I believe are very good reasons.

8.1 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): I rise to make my maiden speech conscious of the very great honour it is for me to represent the constituency of Blackpool, South as only the third Member of Parliament for the constituency in 60 years. I start by paying tribute to my immediate predecessor, Sir Peter Blaker, who served with great distinction in the House for 28 years.

Sir Peter Blaker, as hon. Members of all parties are aware, had a distinguished war record. He served with great distinction as a Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and in the Ministry of Defence. Before his retirement at the general election, he served for some years as the distinguished chairman of the Conservative Back-Bench foreign affairs committee.

I owe a personal debt of gratitude to him for his enormous assistance in the 15 months before the election during which I was the prospective parliamentary candidate, and for his assistance during the general

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election campaign. While I was the prospective parliamentary candidate and during the election campaign, I became very much aware that he was held in deep and genuine affection throughout the constituency. I met many people whom he had helped, and others whose families he had helped and who had enormous admiration for his work for the constituency as its Member for Parliament.

Blackpool, South, which I have the honour to represent, is well known to hon. Members as part of a town that all hon. Members have visited for party conferences. Hon. Members may have a slightly artificial idea of what Blackpool is like if they have visited it only for party conferences. It is not only a host to all the party conferences, but a place with a substantial amount of manufacturing industry, as well as the tourism of which all hon. Members are aware.

The constituency has successful manufacturing industries involved in the production of children's toys and streeet furniture, and in many other areas—not only the manufacture of seaside rock. I hope that in representing the constituency, I shall be regarded as a man with "Blackpool" stamped right through me like a piece of Blackpool rock. It was once said of Queen Mary that she wished to have "Calais" engraved on her heart. I hope that I shall be regarded as a man with "Blackpool" engraved on his heart.

I am especially glad to have the opportunity to speak in a debate on such a vital subject in that I have had great opportunity in my career before coming to the House to be involved in European issues. I have had the opportunity to work with European Commission officials in my position as a company lawyer. If I were not in the House today, I would have been attending a meeting of the European Company Lawyers Association, as I have had the honour to represent company lawyers who are members of the Bar as the chairman of the international committee of the Bar Association for Commerce, Finance and Industry for some years. I have sat on the international practice committee of the Bar Council for some years before I came to the House.

Although, like all new Members making their maiden speeches, I am conscious that it is a great mistake to pretend to any expertise, because we are all aware that there are many hon. Members who are more knowledgeable about any subject under the sun than a new Member can be, I point out to hon. Members of all parties that I have had some involvement in European matters. I know that European issues such as those being addressed in this debate are of great importance to my constituents. It is accurate to say that I have had more correspondence in a few weeks on European issues than on any other political subject.

From my involvement in European matters, I believe that I should say that I have great misgivings about the decision I will ultimately make tonight to support the Government and to support the Maastricht treaty. I regard myself as sceptical about the ambition of various Commission officials to move towards a more federal state and to subsume Britain's independence. I would not support that, but I have great faith in my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary and in what they negotiated at Maastricht. They have managed to get the best that was achievable and they have not sold the pass on Europe. They have maintained our sovereignty, and I have every confidence that they will continue to do so.

I very much supported my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary when he said that we must not have European Commission officials interfering in every nook and cranny of British life. I very much support the Government's decision to maintain our frontier controls, and I very much hope that they will continue to do so.

I would not support the Government tonight if I thought that there would be any surrender of British sovereignty. I do not believe that. I believe that the Maastricht treaty is the result of very successful negotiations, and I have every confidence in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister continuing to maintain British sovereignty. I know that that is very important for my constituents and I have every confidence that the steps that have been taken to increase co-operation on matters such as law and order, which is a cause close to my heart as a lawyer, will be maintained in our future negotiations in Europe.

I am delighted that this country has such a marvellous opportunity to expand its operations in such areas as financial services, with which I have been deeply involved for many years. In financial services we enjoy great opportunities to expand our trade overseas, and I have every confidence that we will continue to do so.

I hope that I have observed the convention of steering away from issues of party controversy, but I promise Labour Members that this may be the last time that I do so.

I believe that one of the main reasons why the treaty deserves support, and why I will support it tonight, is to be found in the successful steps that the Prime Minister has taken to exclude the social chapter and to preserve the progress that the Government have made in cutting down the number of days lost through strikes, in bringing inflation down to German levels and in reducing interest rates.

8.10 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) on his first speech, which I found most impressive, not least because he spoke without notes—a prospect that I find daunting even though I have been here somewhat longer than he has. It is alarming to see so many new Members looking as though they ought to be still at school, let alone making maiden speeches without notes. It is all part of the syndrome whereby the policemen get ever younger and the steps ever steeper.

The hon. Gentleman follows a distinguished Member of this House who was greatly respected. I cannot wish him the length of service that Sir Peter Blaker enjoyed here, but I am sure that he will be a fitting replacement for him in the Conservative cause.

This is one of those debates in which one asks not how long it has been going on but how old one was when it started. It is difficult, if not impossible, therefore, to make an original contribution to it, and I feel a little uneasy because I am not going to make one. But since very few other hon. Members have made original contributions, I do not see why I should be feeling guilty.

In his opening speech, the Prime Minister boasted of how he had won the argument during the negotiations at Maastricht—a claim repeated by various Ministers and the Foreign Secretary. The Prime Minister was referring to the two protocols, one removing Britain's obligation to move to stage 3 of economic and monetary union and the second dropping the social chapter from the treaty and appending it as a protocol applying to all member states except the United Kingdom.

I do not see how that can be claimed as a success. I am a simple sort of person, but I had always thought that winning the argument meant persuading everyone else to agree and adopt the same course. That has not happened to me very often—but then it does not in the Labour party. The British Government are to be excluded, and no one else is going with us. That is a strange notion of success. We may have been excluded only temporarily, but we have been excluded nevertheless.

The first protocol deals with our right not to proceed to stage 3 and a common currency. Those who are very pro-Maastricht and those who oppose it strongly are mistaken in saying that we have a valid option to stay out when the other member states go for a single currency. That is not a practical option; it might exist on paper, but we are talking about realpolitik. The very idea is a sham, which the Government and the Prime Minister have dressed up in an attempt to convince their Back Benchers.

The Government are not short of gullible material on their Back Benches. Conservative Members keep jumping up and saying that they did not realise what Maastricht was all about or what the Single European Act was all about. What a gullible bunch they are. How on earth did they ever get elected? If the majority of states decide by 31 December 1996 to set a date for the commencement of stage 3, and the single currency becomes inevitable, we have no chance of opting out without beggaring ourselves.

Opting out of the social aspect of the treaty is a national disgrace. This country, alone among the 12, cannot go along with the social dimension. The Portuguese, Greeks and Spaniards can, but we cannot. The Prime Minister says that if we go along with it, our industry will be diminished, damaged or destroyed. I cannot believe that the Germans, of all people, would willingly agree to destroy their industry—no more would the French or the Italians. So how come one person says that it will happen in this country and 11 others say that it will not happen in theirs? Are they less patriotic, less concerned about their national economic welfare? What we have done displays a pathetic lack of vision on the part of the United Kingdom.

I heard the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) say that we shall be regarded as a sweatshop economy. That is what we already are, compared with some of our European competitors—we have low wages, long hours and lousy social provision in the workplace.

The Prime Minister said that he has restored the rights of employers and employees to work the hours they want to—but when have employers and employees ever agreed on what hours should be worked? Employers want as many hours out of their employees as they can get, for as low wages as possible. The Conservative Government are not serving the interests of the working people of this country or of our unemployed; in line with tradition, they are serving the interests of the bosses.

There are now two rival social chapters—one applying to 12 and the other applying to 11. Various directives are being blocked by the British Government under the one that applies to all 12. After 1 January 1993, the EC will move into the social protocol all the social dimensions that are being blocked by the British Government, who will not even be present to vote, veto or discuss. I am happy about that, because we are one of the great drag anchors hindering the improvement of social conditions in Europe. But employers and companies who have to operate across the whole Community would find it difficult to use one set of rules in this country and another set in other parts of the EC.

I listened with great respect to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and to my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). Strange to say, the very things that alarm them encourage me. My convictions were strengthened, if they needed to be, by some words of the former Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher:

> "If the EC proceeds in the direction which the majority of member state Governments and the Commission seem to want, they will create a structure that brings insecurity, unemployment and national resentment."

All that could easily be said of Mrs. Thatcher's record in government. She certainly created insecurity in my constituency and around the country, she caused unemployment in spades—and there were plenty of people who felt a great deal of resentment toward her. Nevertheless, I am encouraged by her words, because if she thinks that the EC is as bad as that, I think it must be bloody marvellous.

I am not worried about losing sovereignty. The day of the nation state in western Europe is finished, and I am pleased that that is so and that we are moving towards supranational organisations. Nationalism is a curse—we can see the effects of it in eastern Europe and we can now do something about it in western Europe. When the countries of eastern Europe have worked through their problems, they will be lining up to join the European Community, a Community which will stretch from the Atlantic to the Urals. This is our chance, for the first time in history, to redraw the map of Europe peacefully. That is a wonderful objective to go for.

My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) made a courageous speech. However, he could let the Bill go through on Second Reading, because we could then amend it. Why not give ourselves the opportunity of trying to improve it? If we cannot do that, having set out the arguments, we can vote against Third Reading. Perhaps he should not deny himself that opportunity. On this occasion, I shall be going along with the Labour party. Sometimes I find myself defying the Whips, but today I see no reason for doing so.

8.20 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): People have adduced four reasons for voting for the treaty. The first has just been set out by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who said that nationalism is dead and that nations are dying. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) made the same point yesterday—that nations are dead and that the treaty will kick them into their grave. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West said that nationalism was a curse.

There are two fallacies in that argument. First, nationalism is not all bad. The nation state has resulted in

[Mr. Michael Spicer]

bad things from time to time—no one denies that. Nor does anyone deny that alliances and trade and getting together and maintaining close links with other countries is a good thing. However, it is foolish to argue that the nation state is intrinsically bad, particularly when one concedes, as one has to, that the nation state is the best entity for establishing democratic accountability, particularly this nation state. The sovereign rights and powers in our Parliament should not be easily and lightly thrown over in preference for some sort of Babel of nations getting together in a talking shop that does not hold the executive accountable.

The second reason for being suspicious of the idea that the nation state is dead is that it is not true. If anything, nationalism is stronger than ever before, and it is dangerous to base one's foreign policy on something that is factually wrong. There are different national interests. Germany, for instance, is a central continental power, with interests to the east and the west. France has certain distinct national interests that are anti-American and protectionist. Britain has strong national interests that are Atlantic as well as European and is, as a result, at the crossroads of much international trade. Heathrow is the busiest international airport and Gatwick the third busiest because we are placed at this crossroads of international trade. If we were to become subjugated within Europe, that would not be the case; we would be on the periphery.

The second argument used for voting for the Bill and the associated treaty is the opposite of the previous argument. People say that the Bill is not about federalism or nationalism, it is just a minor step along the road towards greater co-operation. By and large, that tends to be the Government's position. They feel that they were clever in getting the word "federalism" out of the treaty. That argument does not hold up either. For example, the move towards union citizenship must imply the creation of a new state. One must be a citizen of something, even if it is an embryonic state. The Bill is much more open-ended on this matter than people imagine. Some phrases allow for further development of that concept of union citizenship.

The second and fundamental point in judging whether this is a federalist measure is the central question of the establishment of a single currency. Inevitably, the single currency means, and the treaty provides for, a single, in this case, unelected and unelectable bank to manage the currency. It will have exclusive rights to print the money and the right to take over all foreign reserves.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Spicer: I cannot give way, because I have only five minutes in which to finish my speech. If I have time at the end, I will give way.

The single currency implies not just, as some have argued, the narrow concept of money printing. If one is to manage a currency, one has to manage not only the printing of currency, but the fiscal policy around it. Therefore, ultimately one has to manage the taxation and public spending policies associated with the single currency. Indeed, the treaty talks in these terms and provides for the embryonic institutions that will be given total and comprehensive control of all matters concerned with running a single currency. There can be no question but that a move towards a single currency is a move towards a federal united states of Europe.

The third reason people give for supporting the Bill is that it will not work. Their attitude is, "Don't worry—sign it; because it won't work." That is a very un-British thing to do. On the whole, we have been very respectable about that, and have signed treaties because we think that they will work. Therefore, it is logical, proper and moral for us to look at the black and white of the treaty. Furthermore, there are sound precedents for doing so. Only this week we faced the black and white of previous treaties that we have signed and the implications of them.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) made a telling point yesterday, when he raised the question of article 8a of the European Single Act, which deals with immigration. Unfortunately, we have already discovered that declarations do not count or are in some doubt, so we have to go to the text, and the text of this treaty is clear on a number of specific issues concerned with setting up institutions that will then have a pull and momentum of their own. There is no point in saying that we will sign the treaty because we think that it will not work, that the Danes will help us and that the French and the Germans do not like it. That is not the point. We shall sign something and, with the assistance of the European court, this black and white legal document will be implemented.

The fourth and final reason given for voting for the treaty is the British opt-out. I agree to this extent with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. I can imagine, when we have set up the institutions and signed in principle to the treaty, the whips coming up to me and saying, "Look here, Spicer, you are talking about this opt-out as if it were a real option. Have you gone completely out of your mind? We have set up the institutions and everybody is joining them. The whole thing is in place. You are out of date. You have got to go along with us. You can't possibly, under these circumstances, start thinking the whole thing out again. We signed it all in 1992. Weren't you there?" The thing will be set in concrete by then.

What is the point of it all? What are the benefits? I can see certain costs in terms of the threat to our own peculiar —I say that in an admiring way—form of democracy, a form that is not, for example, shared in France. Compared to the British Parliament, the French Assembly does not count for a fig.

I can see certain threats, and to that extent I agree with the Opposition Front Bench. I can see certain security issues arising in future. I accept, of course, that the Western European Union is linked to NATO, but the Americans will not necessarily see things that way. I can see the foundations of NATO beginning to be threatened and ultimately to crumble as a result of the treaty.

I hope that the Opposition will join in some great march in favour of British security, British defence and NATO. We have seen an enormous change in the Opposition's position in this. An interesting point was made by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) when he told us where he stands.

Finally, there is the question of economics. We are at the centre of world trade, we are a high-seas trading nation and we gain by being at the centre. Will we start to move towards the periphery? If we do, there will be no gains. I say that the Bill is bad for Britain, and that it should be rejected.

8.31 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): When I woke up on the morning of 10 April to the full horror of the result of the general election, I felt like one of those demonic figures in Francis Bacon's paintings with tangled, sawn-off brains and see-through faces. I wanted to scream. Inwardly, I have been screaming ever since. All of a sudden, however, I feel better.

We are meeting in this historic debate to confess that we now accept that sovereignty is a myth, that national independence is an illusion and that a love of parliamentary democracy is the fashionable excuse of those who so long for yesterday that they cannot face tomorrow. Tonight, we begin to draw a veil over parliamentary democracy as we have know it since 1832; tomorrow, we begin to unveil a new democracy. Our powerful, over-arching and over-centralised system of government is about to give way to a devolved European pluralism.

Thank God, say I, that there are forces greater than this shrivelled Government and beyond this fatally flawed and divided island that will henceforth share in the control of our destiny. A nation such as ours, which has lost its soul and whose politics is as morally and intellectually bankrupt as the smile on the Minister's face, desperately needs tolerant, decent and civilising influences from Europe, inspired by social democratic ideas, to provide the prevailing ethos.

I have always believed that humility is a great virtue. The House is therefore to be congratulated tonight on recognising that what we have here in Parliament is a little theatre. It is a little palace of varieties. Anyone who thinks that I am being unfair should recall the Prime Minister's speech yesterday. I can paraphrase it in two sentences: "Under this treaty the gradual move towards federalism over the past 20 years has been reversed. We are now moving away from a federal goal as fast as we can." What nonsense. What the Prime Minister said was an abuse of language. The words in the treaty cannot possibly bear the meaning that he ascribed to them.

As the Prime Minister spoke, I was reminded of my days at university when we used to discuss the philosophical problem of the theory of the undistributed middle. The question was whether an object can be black all over and white all over at the same time. Yesterday, the Prime Minister answered the question. He said, "Yes, of course it can." I must tell the Prime Minister that, just as it would not be obvious to a member of the British public that something can be black all over and white all over at the same time, so it would not be obvious to a member of the public who read the treaty that it is a determined rejection of federalism. Indeed, giving its words their ordinary and natural meaning, a member of the public would most likely conclude that the treaty is a significant move towards federalism.

We have in Parliament a theatre in which everyone, including the principal actor, can say anything he likes in as boring a fashion as he likes, provided only that he does not tell the truth. Having listened to the debate, I have come to the conclusion that we, the British, have been brought up to believe that the English Channel, fog and the inability of foreigners to understand our peculiar ways have cut off the continent from Britain.

As a nation, we bask in the unconscious realisation of our effortless superiority. Whether or not it is true that Jesus was born in Bethlehem—and we doubt it—we know that God is an Englishman, and that, had we not become a secular society He, God, would have gone to Maastricht on our behalf and pulled down the temples of Europe.

In Britain, we understand political theory so little that we easily confuse notions of sovereignty, identity and accountability. In our confusion, we fear the French, the Italians, the Greeks and, above all, the Germans. The recently dethroned Prime Minister, who in her lonely torment is learning that politics is a struggle to be remembered, is afraid of the Germans. She was at it again last week. She has allowed her prejudices to be ignited by Professor Norman Stone, a wayward, besotted and populist historian from Oxford university. He is best known in academic circles for presenting low-grade flights of political fantasy as facts.

Likewise, our current Prime Minister is scared to death of Germany's economic strength. He is so afraid of it that he tries to deny that it exists. It is not so long ago that he was telling us, in an effort to excuse his own enfeebled economic performance, that Germany was in a recession. Looking closely at the gross domestic product data, I conclude that only a hapless economic dunce or someone prone to Freudian wish-fulfilment dreams—the Prime Minister may fit both categories—could conclude that Germany is in a recession or has been in a recession.

So why does our Prime Minister want to talk down the German economy? It is time that he woke up to the fact that such is the scale and nature of our trade with our EC partners today that Britain's export performance now depends crucially on the existence of enterprising and successful economies throughout the EC. I am shocked that there are still Members, including the Prime Minister, who do not understand that, inside a developing Europe with a single currency, there can be no reason and no excuse for beggar-my-neighbour economic attitudes.

In a sense, that is the crunch and that is the problem —Britain's opt-out clause over the creation of a single currency that should provide the economic and political bedrock for stability and prosperity in Europe. Instead of putting distance between ourselves and the creation of a single currency, we should be seeking to produce new ideas on economic accountability and further political union to buttress the new currency.

Our Prime Minister justifies Britain's opt-out clauses on the creation of a single currency and on the social chapter by saying that we, the British, bring pragmatism to the discussions on Europe. I remind the cacophonous dissidents and discordant mavericks on the Opposition Benches who agree with him that pragmatism and hypocrisy go hand in hand and have formed the basis of Tory ideology for 100 years. In my view, Europe needs the dynamic of ideas rather than the pragmatism of the supermarket if it is to advance and provide a bulwark for freedom and civilised living.

Maastricht has barely touched on what is needed in the political sphere. On political union, the treaty represents very much a bits-and-pieces solution to the problem. It lacks a certain coherence. Having said that, Maastricht represents an exciting challenge for socialists in Europe through to the end of the century and beyond. It provides us with new ways of thinking and new ways of viewing the world and politics. Laissez-faire economic principles will be allied to the EC's natural interventionist social and political dynamic. The Bruges Group are not entirely brain-dead; they have sussed this out, and it terrifies them.

[Mr. Brian Sedgemore]

So the history of ideology, far from having ended, as we have been told recently, is about to be redefined in the context of a pluralist Europe. I think that is good. I would like to vote in the Aye Lobby tonight, but as one of life's natural cowards, I will do what the Opposition Whips tell me.

8.39 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): For those of us who believe that we should be in the European Community because it will be good for Britain but that we do not want to go down the road of a federal super-state, the question is whether Maastricht centralises us and leads us closer to the federal super-state or leads us further away from it.

That question is difficult to answer, so we look for guidance to those who really know about these matters. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said that this treaty is a reversal of the trend towards centralist and federalist control—and I am a great admirer of my right hon. Friend. Our former Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, says that the treaty moves us towards central control and federalism—and I am a great admirer of Mrs. Thatcher. So I do not appear to have much guidance from those who should be guiding me.

When we add up all the indicators which show that we are moving closer to federal control, and balance them against the number which show that we are moving further away from central control, we are asking ourselves, what is the meaning of subsidiarity? What will that newly defined concept mean in terms of moving either closer to or further away from centralism? That is the item in the shop window which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister displayed as the main indicator of moving further away.

According to article 3b:

"the Community shall take action . . . only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can . . . be better achieved by the Community."

To begin with, that is a very vague concept. If it is thought that it means that any decision should be taken at the lowest possible level, that unfortunately makes me believe that the concept is not all that it is cracked up to be, and for a number of reasons.

First, it should mean—but it does not—that decisions which do not bear on or affect other member states should remain with the nation state or below. Community action will be allowed wherever such "objectives of the proposed action", such as a high level of social protection under article 2, would "be better achieved by the Community". Therefore, the concept of centralisation will apply even where something concerns only one member state if it conforms with the objects of the Maastricht treaty.

Secondly, as the concept is one of devolving powers downwards, inevitably it will be the Community which decides the residue decisions with which it does not wish to deal and which should be devolved downwards—the crumbs from the Community table. That may be challenged by the nation states in the European Court, but, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary conceded this afternoon, that court has usually reflected integrationist tendencies.

Thirdly, subsidiarity applies only to those areas which "do not fall within the Community's exclusive competence", so it cannot apply to vast areas of law, such as all internal market measures and probably most of the existing social provisions which apply to the workplace. In other words, it has a most limited scope.

Fourthly, although subsidiarity was not defined in the Single European Act, it was certainly understood to be a principle which applied. When the Foreign Affairs Select Committee went around Europe asking how that Act was likely to work, we were told that subsidiarity applied. We kept asking people what it meant, but nobody could tell us.

Sunday trading, for example, is something that one would think was a national matter with the subsidiarity rule applying, yet the Commission has found reason to claim that matter to itself. It says that Sunday Trading will have an effect on the importation of goods. Another example is the social charter, which we are told is a matter for European Community control because of its potential effects on the competitiveness of business. Therefore, although one might think that hours of work would be a matter for internal national control, they will be dealt with by the Community if it can get the subsidiarity principle interpreted in that way.

Fifthly, subsidiarity will not stand in the way of the Community if the institutions want to claim power—as they will. We need only look at the institutions. There are 17 Commissioners, each with a vested interest in making his or her portfolio as important as possible. They are underpinned by civil servants, who are well-known empire builders. That is the institution which will be claiming the subsidiarity principle in its favour.

There is the European Parliament, which no one could deny is power-hungry. There is the European Court of 13 judges who will interpret the rule. They would not be there unless they shared the European ideal and believed themselves to be an integral part of the process of European unity. As my right hon. Friend conceded, they have unashamedly acted as architects of European integration.

Subsidiarity is too vague, and it will be worthless as a protection against expansion to the centre. Subsidiarity may be even worse than worthless because if people of the intellect of my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary believe that it will be some protection when in fact it will not, that illusion may lead to a great deal more movement to the centre than they would like to see.

I regret that I have to conclude that the omens for retaining national control of vital areas do not look good. If subsidiarity is all that we have to distinguish between the balance struck between those matters which obviously move away from the centre and those which obviously move towards it, subsidiarity does not look strong enough.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

"This decision is too important to be an act of faith—it must also be an act of judgment, and that judgment cannot sensibly yet be made."—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 265.]

Of course, he was talking about the single currency, but it would apply equally to the whole question of subsidiarity and a drift towards central control.

All those matters disturbed me greatly, and I spent yesterday and today worrying about how I should vote tonight. In fact, I have come down in favour of supporting the Government. I am not someone who slavishly supports

the Government—if I did, I might have been more fortunate in finding favour with my Front Bench. The fact is, however, that we cannot think of a practical alternative to being in the European Community for the good of Britain at the present time. That is the bottom line. We have to be there for as long as we possibly can for the good of our constituents, our workers and our industries, and to achieve the benefits of peace and security which being part of the EC brings us.

It would have to be a very strong reason indeed to make us take a step which might lead to our having to pull out of the Community. I do not think that the Maastricht treaty is as strong a reason as that. It is not all it is cracked up to be, but I do not think that it should destroy our place in the European Community and our ability to stay there. I believe I owe it to my constituents to support remaining in the Community.

However, I say to my right hon. Friends that I voted for the Single European Act having gone through the same process as I am going through now, and I reached roughly the same conclusion. I have already been told, "Why worry about Maastricht—you sold the pass with the Single European Act." I do not want anybody from my Front Bench or any Whip coming to me in 1996, when I come to consider whether there should be a single currency, a central bank and central control——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order.

Mr. Lawrence: If I may just finish——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lawrence: I do not want——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman has had his 10 minutes and other hon. Members wish to speak.

8.49 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The treaty of Maastricht and convergence towards economic and monetary union set a steep and challenging path. The Government face a problem. Should they spell out the difficulties and dangers on the path that they have set and the greater difficulties of alternatives, or should they rest thankfully on the majority cross-party consensus that the goal of EMU offers the best path forward? Whatever the Government decide, it is the duty of hon. Members who see the dangers to spell them out clearly. That hon. Members on both sides of the House are doing.

I do see the dangers, but I do not see a way out of them in seeking a realignment, abandoning economic and monetary union or weakening the exchange rate mechanism. So I cannot go along with my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Steppey (Mr. Shore), still less the Euro-sceptics on the Conservative Benches.

There are undoubted advantages to industry, trade and jobs, in exchange rate stability with our principal trading partners and further advantages in interest rates which do not carry a heavy risk premium covering the expectation of a future devaluation.

If British goods can be made more competitive by reducing their price, fine, but devaluation will not achieve that for a long enough period to affect the balance of payments and jobs. Our price and wage determination practices will inflate away the benefit of lower export prices as people try to cope with higher prices of imports and so of goods in the shops. In addition, adjusting the exchange rates has the effect of extending the period which it would take to re-establish belief in the maintenance of the exchange rate, with higher interest rates in the meanwhile.

Certainly these are matters of judgment. Certainly hon. Members, especially Chancellors, must make those judgments. Perhaps price and wage determination practices will change. Perhaps a new national consensus will be reached on an efficient and fair distribution of income and wealth which will remove inflationary tendencies with the nation no longer trying to get a quart out of a pint pot. Certainly, we should never give up striving to educate people in the facts, if not of life, at least of our economic circumstances.

I have long believed that it is sensible to look at the record of our success—to examine the evidence. First, there is the industrial evidence. Let me give an example. We are currently trying to increase the United Kingdom share of the European steel market by attracting a new generation new technology steel plant to Hunterston in Scotland to replace the great integrated steel works that my constituency is losing.

The possibility of our success in attracting new industry would disappear if we could not rely on maintaining a large cost advantage not only over British Steel but over Germany. The same would be true of much of the new manufacturing capacity which we must create in this country with today's integration of industrial markets.

Such argument about particular industrial projects may be dismissed as anecdotal, so I have tried to look at the wider economic evidence. Somewhat eccentrically for a Member of Parliament, I have not only run the Treasury model, but joined the London Business School, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research and Oxford Economic Forecasting—the leading modelling and forecasting teams which publish the detail of their work. We published the results shortly before the election as a Warwick university discussion paper. It remains the only systematic comparative examination of the medium-term prospects.

All the forecasts imply persistent current account deficits into the medium term of between 1·5 and 2 per cent. of GDP. Moreover, those deficits arise despite the fact that, in the light of recent increases in exports, all the forecasts increase exports above the levels reflecting world trade and United Kingdom price competitiveness. Those adjustments are, in effect, an assumption of continuing improvement in non-price or technological competitiveness, reflecting the recent improved performance of United Kingdom exports. That has stabilised and slightly increased the share of United Kingdom exports on world trade after three decades of steady decline.

The main implications for policy are that the projections for the current account, even on those optimistic assumptions, are based on some fairly fragile extrapolations. The downside risks for the current balance to the exchange rate during the transition to EMU could be considerable. The longer the delay in recognising the problem of the deficit, the greater the risk that subsequent policy tightening may be so severe as to create another recession in the mid-1990s such as we have been plunged into since 1987.

If the problem is recognised early enough, stronger supply side measures could be taken to improve non-price

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

or technological competitiveness. Although those policies take time to work and are neither costless nor risk-free, they do not have the disadvantage of restrictive demand policies which reduce growth and increase unemployment.

My own estimate from the Treasury model is that we need to increase exports of manufactures by 2 per cent. or some £2 billion per annum faster than would be indicated by world trade and relative prices—that is, by increasing our technological competitiveness. We need to keep up that pace of improvement for a full decade. That conclusion is not out of line with considerations that the Chancellor must have had in mind when, in speaking to the CBI, he called for a rate of inflation

"not only below the European average, but as low as the best in Europe measured on a comparable basis"—

which he quantified as 2 per cent. What the Chancellor did not say is that even that rate of inflation will not be enough unless there is a major improvement in technological competitiveness.

That is a challenging but not unattainable target. It means that supply side policies must be at the heart of the Government's economic and industrial policy as we approach EMU, as it would have been of the Opposition's had we been in Government. Maastricht sets the path, but the mountain that we have to climb is still there whatever path we choose. The prospects for the country depend on our being prepared to climb the mountain.

8.56 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me in the nick of time. I am also grateful to both Front-Bench spokesmen for allowing me to eat into their time. I promise that I shall not eat into too much of it and for that reason the House will forgive me if my remarks are somewhat truncated.

Standing here amidst this sea of scepticism, I hope that none of my hon. Friends will have apoplexy if I say that I am at least one hon. Member who will vote for the Bill with great pleasure. I have no hesitation in saying that it represents, as does the Government's attitude to it, very much what I want and, much more important than that, what is best for the country. Having said that, I must tell my hon. Friends that they must come to terms with the decline of national sovereignty in a much smaller and mutually dependent world. That is a generalisation, but it is extremely relevant.

In all the major policy areas—I shall touch on three briefly now—we are effectively coming together anyway because of the extent of our mutual dependency. That goes for financial policy. We can hardly move without our friends and allies. That goes also for foreign policy and, even more so today, for defence policy.

Economic and monetary union will be a reality. Europe will have its ups and downs, convergence may be difficult, and there may be delay—but EMU will come about in 1997 or 1999. It may even be deferred. Rather than go on ceaselessly about national attitudes, the alternative must be faced that, if we were left outside EMU, we would have to follow virtually every move within it. We would be unable to do that, and I do not fancy a Britain that specialises in making Swiss watches or chocolates, or provides eager members of United Nations peacekeeping contingents.

When I arrived in the House more than 18 years ago, an old stager told me that foreign affairs debates were major occasions. I am sure that I will not alarm my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when I say that, short of a regional war, my right hon. Friend, like me, is well used to addressing the House on a Thursday night on a one-line Whip, or on a Friday morning.

When such debates occur, the Diplomatic Gallery is empty. The old stager told me that, in the days when Britain had influence in the world, the Diplomatic Gallery was full for foreign affairs debates. It is significant that, when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made his speech yesterday, not one ambassador or even a diplomat was sitting in the Gallery. There were a few Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Inter-Parliamentary Union guests present, and we were delighted to see them. I hope that that puts matters into perspective for some of my rather reluctant hon. Friends.

Defence matters must of course be decided by intergovernmental co-operation, and of course America must remain in Europe. NATO must also stay—although it will change within itself. There is such a thing as burden-sharing. Uncle Sam will not go on paying. The name of the game is to reorganise in such a way that we keep Uncle Sam here, but without his feeling that he is paying all the bills. Republicans will not rule for ever. The Democrats live in hope, in the same way that the Opposition do in this country. It may be that America will not be as eager to play an active world role for which, to an almost frightening extent, it is wholly responsible.

Europe seems to be undefined in the treaties. We talk about new states joining Europe, but they are not defined. The criteria are all-important. If the Community enlarges too quickly, it will be in danger of collapsing, and certainly of losing its credibility. It is all very well talking about enlargement, but when we can barely afford convergence, it is a little early to speak of gross enlargement.

As to our national interest—I am not entirely an internationalist—there is a somewhat over-eager rush to help all our friends in eastern Europe for understandable political motives, but that should not be done in such a way that they will make more and more of commodities that we already have in abundance. That is as true of agricultural products as it is of Polish steel. Otherwise, we will be flooded from every direction.

Some of the current applications are easy to consider. I refer to Austria, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. The task will be more difficult in respect of eastern Europe and the Baltic states. Some applications will come from countries that arguably are not European states. It is difficult for me to say this, because I have visited Turkey for years, and I am the senior surviving officer of the Russian group in the last Parliament. I do not suggest that we should not have close relations, and the words of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in respect of enlargement were significant. However, when it comes to Turkey, the pass was sold in the 1963 association agreement.

We also have the Council of Europe's membership to consider—but the old defence considerations that used to dictate our attitude have largely gone. Applications must be considered in that light, quite apart from democratic qualifications.

Russia is not a wholly European country, and if we were to try to take it on, our political and economic

digestion would completely explode. No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) would be very happy to see the Community suitably demised. I am sure that I am agreeing with my hon. Friend now.

This country has a world role, and is a good and worthy world influence. That has been proved again and again. I am pompous and conceited enough to suggest that Europe needs us. It needs us historically, to maintain the power balance that without us would be outweighed by other elements.

I am not getting at Germany in any way; I am merely stating the realities of history. Europe needs us for the power balance, but it is important to remember that we also have an obligation to the smaller countries in the Community. If we were not always looking at our own navel and arguing about whether we want to be in Europe or not, we would recognise that those countries occasionally ask us for a lead, and expect us one day to have the foresight and wisdom to give them that lead.

For that reason alone—quite apart from our future as a country in the world, and the sort of role that we want—we belong in Europe. We certainly should not be languishing outside it.

9.5 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Yesterday, the House heard a record number of maiden speeches. Many new Members took part in our extended proceedings, and it has been widely agreed that all their speeches were of a very high quality. I was pleased to note the number of excellent speeches made by Opposition Members, but fairness requires me to add that Conservative Members made excellent maiden speeches as well.

Today, we have heard only one maiden speech. It is as if the great desire to speak were held in check by the need for people to recover from yesterday's events. The hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins), however, broke his duck today, and we welcome him to the House. He paid the customary but—in this instance—well-deserved tribute to his predecessor, Sir Peter Blaker. He also revealed that he entertained some doubts about voting for the Government tonight, but managed to reassure the Whips by concluding that he would do so none the less.

It looks as though the hon. Gentleman will spend some time in this place, and he has already started off on the right note as far as his political career is concerned. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is a lawyer."] Let me say immediately that it is of no significance that he is a lawyer. There is no clear and convincing evidence that they are any more servile than the rest. That is what lawyers might call a rebuttable assumption.

This debate is but the latest in a series of important debates that have preceded and followed the intergovernmental conferences and, of course, the Maastricht summit. It is right that the House should give the fullest consideration to issues that are of profound importance to the future of the European Community, and to our own future as one of its leading members.

In our debate on 21 November last year, which preceded Maastricht, I made some observations about the history of our approach to Europe. I should now return briefly to that theme, by way of introduction to the matters that we are discussing now. I believe that the constant tendency in this country has been to underrate the forces behind the continuing move towards European integration. It started in the 1950s, when Britain did not even attend the Messina conference which led to the birth of the Community. It was thought that it would not happen or that, if it did, it would not amount to much. I believe that we made a similar error of judgment in assessing the potential success of the establishment of the European monetary system in the 1970s.

With the perspective of hindsight, we can now see how wrong such judgments were. We realised eventually that we could not afford to remain outside the European Community—and, similarly, that it was to our advantage to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. The lesson seems to be that we eventually join, but we join late in the day. We should now appreciate that one of the penalties of standing back is lack of influence on the design and development of European institutions that have an enormous impact on our affairs. We should seek not to repeat such errors in the decade ahead.

No one knows for certain whether a single currency will be achieved by the end of this decade, as the treaty proposes, but it is vital to appreciate the impetus behind the movement towards economic and monetary union. Two crucial factors are that by the end of this year the single market will be well established. Every member of the Community, bar one, is already a member of the exchange rate mechanism.

These are reflections of growing financial and economic interdependence, which is of course a worldwide phenomenon but which is particularly noticeable within the European Community. Industry, commerce and finance are increasingly operating across national borders. Capital movements have been almost entirely liberated over the whole Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development area, let alone within the Community.

It is vital that we should recognise that this is a wholly different economic and political environment from that which existed in the 1960s and 1970s. Our appreciation and assessment must reflect these changes. It seems to me essential that we should recognise the limits of theoretical national sovereignty that the real world we live in impose. Perhaps one of the starkest examples of that reality was the raising of British interest rates to 15 per cent. in October 1989, which followed a decision of the Bundesbank and which occurred more than a year before we joined the exchange rate mechanism. On the day that British interest rates were raised, we had theoretical national sovereignty for about 25 minutes.

The fundamental lesson that I draw from that is that, whatever are the precise financial systems constructed by the Community, whether we participate in them or not, we cannot isolate ourselves from the decisions of others.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): It is just conceivable that my right hon. and learned Friend learned the wrong lesson and drew the wrong conclusion from that experience. The truth of the matter is that the then Chancellor of the Exchequer had the option of either adjusting his interest rates to those of the Germans or taking the strain on the exchange rate. If he had thought it to be in the national interest to have a somewhat lower exchange rate, he could have held his interest rates at that level and let the exchange rate fall. That might have been, in the circumstances of the time, a very good thing to do.

[Mr. Peter Shore]

The point, however, is that he had the choice, whereas my right hon. and learned Friend is pursuing a line of policy that will leave us with no choice at all.

Mr. Smith: I wonder whether he did have so much of a choice after the Bundesbank had raised its interest rates? It seems to me—this is characteristic of most of his interventions in these debates—that my right hon. Friend is stuck in the world of the 1960s and 1970s and that he has not perceived the changes in the 1980s and 1990s that have arisen from, among other things, the operations of multinational companies and deregulation. My right hon. Friend often argues about the desirability of floating exchange rates. We had these high levels of interest rates when we had floating exchange rates and before we entered the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Leighton: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Smith: As my hon. Friend probably wants to follow up that point, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Leighton: Is it not the case that, since that historic occasion, the Bundesbank put up its interest rates by 0·5 per cent. and we did not do so?

Mr. Smith: We are now in the exchange rate mechanism. I do not know what conclusion my hon. Friend draws from that. However, when we had a floating exchange rate, our interest rates were very high. Moreover, despite the so-called advantages of floating exchange rates, we also had very high levels of unemployment during that period, though they were caused substantially by the policies that were followed by the Conservative party.

One of the most important tasks is to recapture the influence that Governments ought to have over economic and monetary policy. In a world in which industry and finance operate internationally, Governments—if they are to be effective—must do the same. In order to regain a lost sovereignty, a sovereignty lost by the internationalisation of economics, it is necessary to share it.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Smith: In a moment.

That is what I believe lies at the heart of the debate and probably at the heart of all our discussions on the European Community.

Ms. Short: I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend. With the greatest respect, I think that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton)—my honourable comrades if I may call them that—are stuck in the past. We now need Europe to regulate capitalism in the way that we used to seek to use the nation state to regulate it, but I must say to my right hon. and learned Friend that the terms of Maastricht are so deflationary and so monetarist that I am deeply worried that they will cause a blight across Europe with regard to levels of unemployment. Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept uncritically the terms on which we are supposed to enter the Maastricht agreement in respect of economic and monetary union?

Mr. Smith: I do not accept them uncritically, and nor does the reasoned amendment tabled by the Labour party. If my hon. Friend will allow me, I shall develop precisely that point by making criticisms of the arrangements which emerged from Maastricht.

The shared sovereignty of which I speak is reflected in common agreed policies and in common institutions. One of the issues which rightly concern us is the question of democratic accountability in the decision-making processes of the Community, especially as it enters new spheres of economic and monetary competence.

In previous debates, we urged the Government to place special importance on that issue, especially in relation to the European central bank and the general policy-making framework for economic and monetary policies. There is, I regret to say, no evidence whatsoever that the Government have shown the slightest interest in that fundamental question from the beginning of the debate on the Delors report right up until today. They have not produced concrete proposals to achieve and maintain a proper system of accountability for the new institutions proposed in the Maastricht treaty.

From the competing currencies plan of 1989, through the hard ecu of 1990 and the opt-out of 1991, the Government have sought ways of avoiding the issue, rather than tackling it. It has been left to others—for example, the French socialist Government—to fight that corner with no help from British Conservatives. It was, for example, Mr. Beregovoy, the former Finance Minister and now Prime Minister of France, who tabled proposal, for greater accountability of the European central bank to Finance Ministers and who also insisted on the Economic and Finance Council being given the responsibility to develop Community economic policy. In the negotiations, the French were forced to compromise and the model for the bank is not what they or, indeed, we find ideal.

Direct accountability to the elected Finance Ministers would have been preferable. However, the French secured a significant limitation to the bank's autonomy by ensuring that decisions about the level of the exchange rate of the proposed single currency are to be made by the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers.

We should like to know—no doubt the Chancellor will tell us—what the British Government were doing during the international economic conference on that matter. No report has been made to the House nor, so far as I know, has there been an attempt by Ministers to deal with it in their speeches. Instead, their approach has been to try to avoid the issues entirely by the opt-out device. We are asked not to bother about the issues because they say that, at the end of the day, Britain is not committed to sign up for the single currency.

The Government used to talk about being opposed to an imposed single currency, but there was never any question of a single currency being imposed on us or of the final decision on whether to join a single currency being made other than in the House. The Government expended their political capital at Maastricht on negotiating the opt-out on EMU and on the social chapter instead of exerting themselves with others to improve the decision-making framework for economic and monetary policy. At present, that framework has been decided without any substantial input—or perhaps any input at all—from the British Government.

Nor did the Government appear to make a great deal of progress on how excessive budget deficits by member

states were to be handled. In the pre-Maastricht debate on 21 November, I raised that point directly with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and asked him what the Government's position was on the rules proposed in the draft treaty, which was then before us. The Chancellor replied:

"the proposals in the treaty are too onerous. We shall be working to ensure that the procedure catches only deficits that are clearly excessive and unsustainable. We shall try to secure in the negotiations rules that ensure that limitations on deficits operate with the lightest possible touch."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 517.]

As far as I can see, no substantial change was made to the treaty in that respect, although the Chancellor claimed in the post-Maastricht debate that he had achieved the objectives laid down in the previous debate. No doubt he will seek to explain how he claims to have secured a modification of the rules.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I am terribly pushed for time, but I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Higgins: Is not the issue modified considerably by the provisions of the opt-out clause?

Mr. Smith: I was talking about how the system will work, if and when Britain enters into the single currency. I do not believe that the provisions of the opt-out clause are relevant to that.

We do not believe that the policy of the Community on that issue should rest only on the provisions of the protocol on excessive deficits procedure annexed to the treaty—a reference value of 3 per cent. for the public sector borrowing requirement and 60 per cent. for the national debt. More emphasis should be placed on paragraph 3 of article 104 of the treaty, which obliges the Commission to take account of levels of Government investment expenditure and

"all other relevant factors, including the medium term economic and budgetary position of the Member State."

There must be a flexible rather than rigid approach to this matter if it is to work effectively. If not, it will become an artificial impediment to the progress of the whole venture.

We regret, as we made clear in our reasoned amendment, that the convergence criteria set out in the treaty are too narrowly formulated on financial and monetary issues. It would be preferable for the criteria to be expanded to take account of the real economy, including progress on sustainable economic growth and the attainment of high levels of employment—which, after all, are set out as objectives of the Community in article 2 of the treaty. I remind the House that article 2 sets out the tasks of the Community as to promote

"balanced development . . . sustainable and non-inflationary growth, respecting the environment, a high degree of convergence of economic performance, a high level of employment and of social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among Member States."

The fundamental flaw in the opt-out strategy has been pointed out in previous debates, but I do not believe that it has yet been answered by the Government. The opt-out is relevant only in circumstances in which the British economy has achieved convergence, because any country that fails to achieve convergence would have been given a derogation from the treaty at the point at which the single currency was formed.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I must get on.

It is hard to envisage circumstances in which the United Kingdom could afford to opt out when convergence has occurred and a sufficient number of countries are ready to establish a single currency.

The other important omission from the Maastricht treaty is the Government's decision to opt out of the social chapter. We have consistently supported the concept of a strong social dimension in the European Community. The improvement of the standard of living and the enhancement of personal opportunity for ordinary people who live in the partner countries seems to us to be a basic and highly desirable objective.

In other countries, the interlocking of economic progress and social justice is better understood than it is in this country. It is a sign of the ideological isolation of British Conservatives that they are alone in their dogmatic approach to the social chapter of the treaty. It is worth reminding ourselves that it involves improvement of the working environment to protect health and safety conditions of work, information and consultation of workers, equality between men and women in the workplace and help for the long-term unemployed and disabled. In all those important areas, the result of Britain opting out will be that our people will be disadvantaged in relation to the common progress that will be established in the other 11 member states.

The justification offered by the Government appears to be that there will be economic advantage for Britain if our people are entitled to fewer rights than the citizens of other Community countries. That seems to flow from the British Conservative delusion that we cannot so much compete as undercut, that jobs can be secured and maintained only if wages and conditions are worse and that investment will somehow be attracted if we have a low-tech, low-skill and low-wage economy. The Government are choosing to be a bargain-basement economy on the edge of Europe.

The Labour party believes that analysis to be fundamentally flawed. It is deeply unfair for those of our citizens who are trapped in low wages and poor conditions, and it shows a fatal misunderstanding of what is necessary to create a modern dynamic economy. The Government do not understand that the way forward for Britain is to create a high-tech, high-skill economy that will produce high rewards for our people. Instead of joining the rest of the European Community to achieve that, we ostentatiously turn our face against their joint conclusion—all 11 of them—and choose the cul de sac of opt-out.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition pointed out at the beginning of the debate yesterday that Britain's poor record on social progress has not brought us economic success. It has not done so in the past and it is unlikely to do so in the future. We cannot see why decent levels of maternity leave and maternity pay, which could bring such benefit and security to ordinary families, should be regarded as either undesirable or threatening to the basis of our economy. Surely this is a matter upon which we should seek to make common cause with other countries by creating a floor of minimum provisions that would prevent bad employers from obtaining an advantage over the good, with families in every country gaining the benefit of the provisions.

[Mr. Smith]

I stress the point about employers, because it is important that the employer who wishes to achieve civilised conditions and good levels of pay for his work force should be protected against the activities of others in this country or elsewhere in the Community who seek to undermine the progress that he is seeking to make. So, while it is a great advantage for people who work for their living, as the majority of people in Community countries do, it is also a significant advantage for those who employ them. I am glad to say that that is understood clearly, particularly by the employers' organisations in the Community. Unfortunately, it is not understood by the British Conservatives.

The Prime Minister said at the beginning of the debate that he thought that the social chapter was about ideology against common sense. And so it is—it is the dogmatic and blinkered ideology of the Conservatives against the common sense of all the other countries of the European Community. It is a triumph of ideology, but the Prime Minister has got it the wrong way round, and not for the first time.

Regrettably, the Government have no ambition for the social progress that the rest of the Community seeks and which is embodied in the protocol attached to the Maastricht treaty. We regret very much that Britain is excluded from that and from the decision taking process in the years ahead. The Government have shown no real understanding of the economic challenges of the decade ahead. Both those tendencies are present in their opposition to the social chapter and in their opt-out mentality.

There is no future in Britain being relegated to the sidelines as the rest of the Community advances in terms of social progress and economic success. That lack of balance—the lack of understanding of the interconnection between social progress and economic advance—flaws the domestic policies pursued by the Government, which are revealed in their stark simplicity compared with the activities and views of other member states, and it is deeply to be regretted that in the Maastricht process, once again, British Conservatives preferred their ideology to the needs of our people and of the wider European Community. For that reason, but also for other reasons, we shall vote for our reasoned amendment.

9.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): As the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) observed, this is our third debate on the negotiations at Maastricht. In November, the Government sought in advance the House's endorsement of the key objectives of the negotiations, and after Maastricht we returned and explained fully to the House the results and how we had satisfied the objectives that we had set ourselves. Today, we are debating the Second Reading of the Bill that will enable us to implement the objectives that we set ourselves.

Each of those debates has been significant, and each one more so than the last. This two-day debate has been even more important, but it goes without saying that the most important debate is the one that will eventually decide whether we move to a single European currency.

The result of this process has been that the issues involved have been more widely understood throughout the country before, during and immediately after the Maastricht summit. No other country in Europe has been through the same process as us or had such an open and public debate. It is quite obvious that a number of countries in Europe are beginning to regret that. In Germany, attachment to the deutschmark as a symbol of German economic success is strong, and there are those who question the wisdom of a firm commitment now to move to monetary union in 1997 or 1999 without some form of parliamentary review, as we have negotiated for this country. That is true of France, too, where doubts have been expressed about the political implications of a move to European union. In Denmark, the referendum necessary to accept the treaty may be closer than originally expected.

My expectation is that in all 11 other member states, as here, the Maastricht treaty will eventually be ratified. As President Delors commented, the other member states might well have been better advised to stimulate public discussion before, rather than after, the treaty was agreed.

In the past two days, we have had a remarkable debate. As the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said, some considerable and notable maiden speeches have been made, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins), who expressed scepticism about what he saw as the centralising tendency of the Community and outlined his reasons for so believing.

We heard some remarkable speeches from different viewpoints—the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) and, from a different viewpoint, the powerful speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). I would not be half as hard as the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was on his poor old friend, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who made some telling points on which the House would be wise to reflect.

The negotiations leading up to Maastricht were arduous and complex and there were certain key objectives that we had to secure. Above all, we sought a treaty which struck the right balance between co-operation in Europe and national sovereignty and which laid out the road to economic and monetary union without committing Britain to move to a single currency—a treaty that enshrined the principle of subsidiarity, and did not allow economically damaging legislation to be imposed on this country. The treaty to which we agreed at Maastricht satisfies all those objectives.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said yesterday, the provisions dealing with subsidiarity are, for us, an important part of the treaty—not just for what they say, but because they represent the beginning of a debate about what it is appropriate for the Community to do at its level, and what it is appropriate for nation states to do at their level.

The absence of guidance on that point in the past has led to some damaging measures emanating from Brussels in the name of Europe—centralising, standardising, inefficient and highly bureaucratic measures. With the subsidiarity provisions included in the treaty, of course we have not yet won the argument, but the subject is now firmly on the agenda—and so it should be.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary set out earlier today the treaty provisions covering co-operation in foreign and security policy, and in justice and home affairs. In response to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, I shall deal with the subject of monetary union and a European currency. There could not be a more important issue for the House, but, in our view, that issue should not be decided finally and irrevocably today.

We have debated before the potential advantages seen in the idea of a single European currency. First, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) emphasised, there are commercial advantages. There would be reductions in transaction costs both for businesses and for tourists. It would no longer be necessary to change money from one Community currency into another to buy goods or services. Secondly, the elimination of exchange rate risks could provide a significant boost to European trade and investment. Thirdly, substantial potential advantages for Britain's important financial services industry could flow from our participation in a single currency, given the important position of the City of London as an international financial centre.

Perhaps the most important potential advantage that could be held out for a European currency is low inflation. An independent European central bank could be a powerful anti-inflationary force across the whole of Europe.

Mr. Salmond: When the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister go to Edinburgh at the end of this year, they will be welcomed by the new Scottish National party lord provost of that city. Will the Chancellor then be able to say that he has been backing the "Eurofed for Edinburgh" campaign, or will his party back London, as usual?

Mr. Lamont: I shall deal with that point in a minute, if the hon. Gentleman will contain himself for a moment.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough) *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I shall continue, if the hon. Gentleman will allow me.

I have described the advantages put forward in favour of a single European currency. On the other hand, as the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) said, we cannot ignore the uncertainties that surround a single currency. Unless the economies of Europe are genuinely prepared for it, a single currency could exacerbate regional imbalances and unemployment, necessitating huge transfers of resources between countries. Both those things would be undesirable.

The political implications are even more important. The treaty provides for the irrevocable locking of exchange rates—an irreversible commitment. Such a step involves transferring important powers over economic policy from national Governments to an independent monetary authority.

Yesterday I listened carefully to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, and greatly admired the clarity and certainty of his conviction, just as I admired the clarity and certainty of his conviction when he used to argue that we should get out of the Community. He asked why we could not decide today on such an important issue. He believes—the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East persisted with the point—that we should make that choice today.

We take a different view. A move to a single currency may well not occur until the end of the decade. We cannot precisely predict the future shape of Europe at that time. I entirely accept what my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said about the countries of eastern Europe and about it taking a long time before their living standards are up to the level at which they can be full members of the Community. That is a powerful point and I entirely agree with it. In the interim, it is in the interests of eastern Europe and of the Community that we should open up our markets to give those countries all the help and encouragement we can. That process should begin now, and some countries in the Community have been far too reticent about doing that.

Whatever the claims, it is impossible for us to say now that a single currency will definitely help to deliver price stability. We do not know what economic conditions will prevail when the time to make a decision comes. We do not even know how many members the Community will then have. I very much hope, and subject to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup has said, that in the years to come it will be possible to expand Community membership first to the European Free Trade Association countries and then, when they are ready, to the emerging democracies and emerging market economies of eastern Europe.

Nor do we know how many other Community countries will be moving to a single currency at the time when a decision has to be made. If the move were to take place in 1997, a majority of member states would have to move. If it were to take place in 1999, there would be no minimum—in theory, any number of states between two and 12 would be significant.

The other factor is that there is to be another intergovernmental conference in 1996 which may have some implications for the institutional balance and the development of the Community. Is that not also something that should be taken into account before we make a final decision on the matter?

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. Friend agree, in the light of what he said in December in the Maastricht debate about there being a price to be paid for a single currency and a central bank, that the price, if we were to accept it, would include the derogation of our democratic principles in the House? Does my right hon. Friend have a comment to make on that? Will he kindly explain that, if we were to hand over those powers to unelected and unaccountable bankers, it would effectively mean the end of the monetary and economic policy that he follows in his high office now?

Mr. Lamont: If my hon. Friend will bear with me, I will come on to precisely that point.

Mr. Bell: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: For the reasons I have given, it is the Government's view that a decision of such crucial political importance cannot be prejudged now, rubber-stamped and simply left to some automatic judgment and something called "convergence criteria". It is a bigger decision than that.

I was astonished by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. His speech was at least memorable

[Mr. Lamont]

when he talked about the "cul de sac" in an opt-out clause, which was a fairly remarkable phrase. The protocol gives us an absolute assurance that the decision will be taken at the right time by the elected Parliament of the day in the full possession of the relevant facts. In our view, that is precisely how it should be. The protocol does not in any way diminish our right to participate in stage 3 on exactly the same terms as other member states. If we meet the convergence conditions, we have an absolute right to join the single currency if Parliament so decides.

One common issue has run through all the debates. It was expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) in his speech. It was expressed very forcefully by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North and it has been expressed by the former right hon. Member for Finchley. The question is: is it possible to have European economic and monetary union without also being obliged to move towards political union—towards the creation of a European state? That is the question that has bothered some of my hon. Friends—how far are monetary union and the single currency compatible with the vision of Europe that the Prime Minister spelled out yesterday—a vision of a more liberal, more open and wider Europe?

The answer to this crucial question depends on the precise terms of the framework of the single currency and how it develops. Clearly, a currency union cannot function without some overall discipline on national budget deficits. A single currency could not work if Governments pursued irresponsible, lax fiscal policies. But having a general fiscal rule is not the same as surrendering control over the levels of taxation and expenditure.

It is, however, clear that a single currency—here I approach the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford—involves removing control of monetary policy from national Governments. The treaty proposes that it should be handed, not to a European executive, Government or state, but to a monetary authority independent of all national Governments—[HON. MEMBERS: "Unelected."] Indeed, but many countries in Europe and throughout the world have already made such arrangements with their national central banks, and I have often heard hon. Members on both sides of the House argue for an independent central bank even without a commitment to a European currency. These are profound issues, and it was awareness of them that dictated our objectives at Maastricht.

Mr. Bell: The European central bank seems to be dominating the debate. Would it not be more desirable for this country to participate in a European central bank on whose board the Governor of the Bank of England would serve and involving accountability through ECOFIN than to attend on the decisions of the Bundesbank, which affect the whole of Europe? Are we not better off controlling our own destiny through such a bank than allowing the Bundesbank to control it for us?

Mr. Lamont: That is precisely the issue that I am trying —no doubt somewhat laboriously—to deal with. I am trying, to the best of my ability, to sum up the pros and cons.

Although some member states would have preferred a more substantial stage 2, we argued that, unless and until a decision on a single currency had been made, responsibility for economic policy—this is the result of the treaty—should remain unambiguously in national hands. The treaty makes it clear that in stage 2 member states will have the freedom to pursue their own economic policies as they judge right in their own circumstances. That applies not just to Britain by virtue of its protocol but to every other country in Europe—but only because we negotiated and pressed for it.

Mr. Benn: Let us suppose that an independent bank imposes, through its power, deflationary policies that cause mass unemployment in the name of price stability. What remedy will be available to the electorate or the Government to prevent a repetition of the tragedy of the 1930s, when we had mass unemployment, with political consequences that everyone in this country and Europe still remembers?

Mr. Lamont: Unlike the right hon. Gentleman, I believe that tough anti-inflationary policies are more likely to generate jobs than their alternative. I know that he does not agree, but if I had to choose between submitting to the discipline of an independent bank or submitting, after mistakes has been made, to the disciplines and letters of Mr. Witteveen of the IMF, I know what I would choose.

What I said of stage 2 is true of both monetary and fiscal policy. In stage 2 of economic and monetary union, the Community will be able to offer economic advice to member states over budget deficits, but it cannot interfere with their right to tax, spend and borrow as they see fit.

Our third objective was to ensure that, whatever our reservations about a single currency, if a monetary union were to come into being, it should be practical and it should work. Therefore, it was important that it be founded on lasting economic convergence. A monetary union or a single currency based only on mounting fiscal transfers between countries or on sharply rising unemployment would be unsustainable and undesirable. The convergence conditions set out in the treaty are intended to be demanding and to make that less likely.

To be eligible to move to the third stage of EMU, a member state will need to bring its interest rates and inflation rates closely into line with the best performing states in the Commumnity. That is essential if a monetary union is to be workable.

Yesterday, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney referred to what I said to the CBI. The point that I was making there was that, whether or not we eventually move to a single currency, the convergence criteria, for us at least, are a useful goal for macro-economic policy. A firm exchange rate, firm budget disciplines and low inflation are valuable in themselves, regardless of whether or not we are a member of a future single currency zone.

The right hon. Gentleman made an elegant and powerful speech and gave the House much on which it will wish to reflect. However, to be frank, he was less persuasive when he simply objected to these policies because he disagreed with the objectives. We pursue the aims of low inflation and sound finance not because of the treaty or any obligations but because we have chosen to do so and because they are the right objectives.

Our fourth objective was to establish the principle that, even within an eventual currency union, member states —here I come to another point raised by the right hon.

Gentleman—should have the maximum possible freedom to pursue their own economic policies, particularly fiscal policy.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: I am addressing a point made by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney.

As I have already conceded, in a currency union some general overall discipline on budget deficits nationally is clearly required. Our objective was to see that, even in stage 3, any Community-level discipline operated with the lightest possible touch. As the right hon. Gentleman recognised, we got the provisions altered, contrary to what the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) knows that. We got them altered, so they are less onerous. If some member states choose to run lax fiscal policies and have large budget deficits, that can affect countries throughout Europe and push up interest rates and undermine the success of a single currency.

We do not believe that a single monetary policy requires the central determination of individual countries' levels of taxes and spending. We were seeking a balance between what was responsible and necessary, and the freedom of countries to determine their own levels of taxes and spending. I believe that the treaty achieves that.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney referred to the so-called 3 per cent. deficit ceiling written into the treaty. Let me emphasise that it is intended merely as a trigger for investigation and analysis by the Commission and the Council of Ministers. It is not 3 per cent. by itself; it is 3 per cent. that has to be considered judgmentally against the background and history of the individual country's fiscal policy.

It is for the Council to determine whether a deficit is excessive, taking into account all the relevant factors, including the past and the cyclical positions. Only then could the Council apply sanctions to a member state. That process would inevitably involve an element of judgment, with the budget being looked at over a number of years. Therefore, the 3 per cent. ratio would be neither a ceiling nor a limit, and it is not right to argue that the treaty prohibits deficits of a certain figure.

Certain points were raised——

Mr. Morgan: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: No. I wish to answer a point raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) and for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North, on which I think there has been genuine misunderstanding.

I assure my right hon. and hon. Friends that article 99, which deals with the harmonisation of indirect taxes, is merely repeating the words contained—they may object to them anyway—in the Single European Act about the harmonisation of indirect taxes insofar as that is necessary for the internal market. The article has merely added a provision about consulting the Economic and Social Committee. I assure my right hon. and hon. Friends that we shall adhere to our policy of agreeing only tax harmonisation that we believe is necessary for the proper functioning of the single market. We entirely reject the harmonisation of direct taxes.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Chancellor of the Exchequer give way?

Mr. Lamont: I am sorry, but I must reply to points that were made in the debate.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and others raised the question of the location of the European monetary institute and the central bank. The priority must be to decide on the location first of the EMI. The United Kingdom was the first to argue for the establishment in stage 2 of an institution like the EMI instead of having a central bank in stage 2. In our view, Britain therefore has undoubtedly a strong claim to be the seat of the EMI. It would be very much in the interests of the Community and the new institutions if they were based in the Community country with the leading financial centre in Europe. London is the leading player in the rapidly growing private ecu market. When the decision is taken to set up the central bank, we believe that Britain —not London alone but other centres—will be the strongest candidate.

We continue to reject unnecessary harmonisation of social policy. It is no surprise that the Labour party should seek to surrender the right of the House to make decisions that govern how the people of this country should live and work. The Opposition have clearly lost any confidence that they used to have in their own ability to persuade the British electorate, so they seek instead to bring back trade union power through the back door from Brussels. Our decision not to sign the social chapter means that they cannot get via the back door what last month's general election demonstrated they could not get openly from the British people.

The social chapter would have allowed agreements by employers and trade unions at Community level to become binding on all employers and employees across the Community. It would have given trade unions powers that they did not even have in the 1970s. That in itself would have been enough to make it unacceptable. We were not prepared to have the effect of the trade union reforms that we worked so hard to introduce in the 1980s undone by the provisions in the social chapter. That is why the Government were not prepared to sign it. The other 11 member states may, if they so wish, use their separate Maastricht agreement to adopt new and far-reaching measures on social policy, but those measures will not apply to us and we will not be obliged to implement them.

The draft working time directive, although it has been brought forward under existing treaty provisions, is a good example of the sort of job-destroying legislation that we feared might be proposed under the social chapter. We will continue to resist similar damaging and misguided proposals in future, too. But our task would have been infinitely more difficult had we done as the Opposition suggest and signed away our right of veto over the entire range of social policy issues.

There is no denying that the Maastricht treaty has major implications, but I shall make clear what it does not mean. It does not imply that this country will be obliged to increase its contribution to European Community expenditure. Several of my hon. Friends have raised questions about the expenditure implications of the treaty. Let me make it clear that the treaty does not involve any commitment to increase expenditure. When it comes to funds for cohesion, we insist that that is something that is to be examined in the context of other existing structural

[Mr. Lamont]

funds. There is no commitment to increased expenditure. When it comes to increasing the own resources ceiling, we are far from convinced. We see no need for that ceiling to be increased. It goes without saying that we are determined to preserve our own abatement.

The Bill puts forward the vision of Europe of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—an open Europe, a Europe that will grow wider, a Europe that is open to market forces and a Europe that will increasingly be seen to be in concert with the wishes of the people of this country and Members of this place. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 261, Noes 360.

Division No. 16] **[10.00**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nicholas
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoff
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
MacDonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson, and
Mr. Martyn Jones

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard

Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Carlile, Alexander (Montgomry)
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Rushcliff)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'shr)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (Antrim S)
Forth, Eric
Foster, Donald (Bath)
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Howell, Ralph (North Norfolk)
Hughes Robert G. (Harrow W)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jones, Robert B. (W H'f'rdshire)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knox, David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCrea, Rev William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (Hants NW)
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Robinson, Peter (Belfast E)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Ross, William (E Londonderry)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Smyth, Rev Martin (Belfast S)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, Rt Hon D. (Strangford)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)

Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading):—

The House divided: Ayes 336, Noes 92.

Division No. 19] **[10.16 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl'if)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Faulds, Andrew
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendron, Dr Joe
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'l'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Mallon, Seamus
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*

Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D. (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George (Acton)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Berry, Roger
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Budgen, Nicholas
Butcher, John
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ronald (Blyth V)
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, James
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cran, James
Cummings, John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge H'l)
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Etherington, William
Forsythe, Clifford (Antrim S)
Galloway, George
Gerrard, Neil
Gill, Christopher
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Ms Lynne (B'ham S O)
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCrea, Rev William
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Marlow, Tony
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Mullin, Chris
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Porter, David (Waveney)
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Robinson, Peter (Belfast E)
Ross, William (E Londonderry)
Rowlands, Ted
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Smyth, Rev Martin (Belfast S)
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Taylor, Rt Hon D. (Strangford)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Trimble, David
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'fld)
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Ron Leighton.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. —*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Committee tomorrow.

Madam Speaker: Order. Before we begin the Adjournment, I ask those hon. Members who are handing in amendments to the Bill to do so in good order. The Clerk has one hand only with which to take them. If hon. Members were to read the report of the Select Committee on Procedure, they would know that the Clerk can receive the amendments with one hand only because he has a pen in the other.

Bullying in Schools

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10.30 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to discuss the important subject of bullying. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: I shall give the hon. Member a little time. Would hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber please do so quickly and quietly? We need to proceed with the business of the House.

Mr. Coombs: Sadly, bullying in schools casts a blight on the lives of thousands of children.

The catalyst for the debate was the sad and tragic death of Katharine Bamber, aged 16, who committed suicide in my constituency on 31 March. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Will hon. Members leave the Chamber quietly please?

Mr. Coombs: Katharine left a note that said:

"Dear Family,

I hate my life. People . . . make it hell. I hate them for threatening me and calling me a tart and slag. I can't take it anymore. I'm very scared and hurt inside by them and the only way I know out is by killing myself."

Two hours later, Katharine was found hanged in the garage at her parents' home.

The case has received a great deal of publicity on television and in the national press. Although it is a matter, sadly, of some controversy, it has not been dealt with as sensitively as I would have liked. Although I appreciate the desire to consider bullying from the point of view of the children in schools as well as from that of children such as Katharine, it was extremely insensitive of the chairman of the education committee of Hereford and Worcester county council to hold a press conference that made Katharine's reputation a matter of controversy. Her family were in no position to answer back.

Such cases are never simple, but it is possible to draw a number of conclusions from that local case. First, it would be extremely foolhardy to discount bullying as a reason for Katharine's suicide. Secondly, the local education authority is now committed to conducting an investigation into the circumstances at the school that surrounded that unhappy incident. Thirdly, the debate gives me an opportunity to pay tribute to the Bamber family, who have steadfastly and nobly sought to turn Katharine's sad death into an opportunity to bring forth to the nation the subject of bullying. I hope that this debate goes some way towards doing that.

It is an important campaign, because bullying in schools is disruptive for the person being bullied and to the general ethos of discipline and good order in the schools and, as a result, to the standards that can be maintained. The measurement of bullying is extremely difficult. Almost by definition it is a matter of perception, particularly when mental rather than physical bullying is involved. Also, many children are so scared of the consequences if they do report acts of bullying that they do not do so.

Some academic research has been done into the incidence of bullying. Michelle Elliot compiled a study between 1984 and 1986 of 4,000 children between the ages of five and 16. She found that no less than 68 per cent. had been bullied at one time or another; 38 per cent. had been bullied seriously; and 8 per cent. had been bullied so consistently and oppressively that their lives had been blighted by it. Delwyn Tatton, who has made a study of bullying in schools here and abroad, was quoted in the report of the Elton committee, which the Government set up to look into school discipline, as saying that bullying was widespread and too often ignored by teachers.

Childline, and Bullyline, which has been set up by the BBC in conjunction with British Telecom and the Government in recent months, found that in only three months in 1990 it received no fewer than 7,600 calls from children alleging bullying. That led to 2,000 firm cases where information could be studied in detail. Jean La Fontaine, an educational academic funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation, found that no fewer than one in seven or 1·3 million children throughout this country were being bullied at any one time.

Many people might say that bullying, disruptive behaviour, fighting and teasing are part of growing up in schools. Inevitably, children compete with each other, form themselves into individual groups and are jealous of each other's boy friends and girl friends. The National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations has said that children should be able to stand up for themselves. We all agree with that. However, when bullying becomes oppressive, systematic, organised and continuous, it can make the lives of children in this country no less than hell. I can use examples of letters that I have received and letters received by Childline to show some of the problems.

First, I have a letter from a family whose son was bullied for two and a half years. It says:

"We watched our son change from a normal happy, healthy boy. He became thin and pale, walking with his head and shoulders dropped. Our GP eventually realised that the stomach pains, backaches etc. that he had been treating . . . were all psychosomatic. It would take pages and pages to tell you all the wicked things that happened . . . he took more verbal and physical abuse in those 16 months than anyone should go through in a lifetime."

I have another letter from a man aged 49 who wrote in to talk about his school experience in Newcastle upon Tyne. He talked about physical torture, and some of the things that he described can be called nothing else. He said:

"The verbal abuse included terrible sexual innuendoes about my Mother and what they would like to do to her. These verbal obscenities affected me more than anything else and created terrible nightmares."

Another girl wrote saying that at school she had been beaten up no fewer than 168 times:

"If I had told the school, told my Dad, told ANYBODY then things would probably be different. I stopped telling them though when they stopped punishing her"—

in other words, the bully.

"Telling her often didn't do the slightest bit of good at all. It only made things worse because she knew she could get away with whatever she liked."

Perhaps most poignant, a boy aged 12 wrote a poem about his experiences of being bullied only six months ago. Sadly, that bullying continues. He said:

"It makes us unhappy
It makes us mad
It steals our childhood
It's sad to be sad
It makes us moody
It makes us cry
It makes us feel we want to die. . .
Four more years of terror to go"—

he was 12—

"Can I stand it? I don't know.
'The best years of your life' they say

But I'd give anything to stay away."

I remember an incident involving an eight-year-old boy who, in his first term as a boarder at prep school, was systematically belted with a leather whip by the 13-year-old prefect in charge of the dormitory and, in the middle of winter, held by his ankles over a 30 ft drop. I remember that vividly and was horrified by it, because that eight-year-old was my twin brother 30 years ago.

The conclusions that we should draw from these appalling experiences are, first, that mental bullying is often as vindictive and felt as hard by the victim as physical bullying. Secondly, although most children recognise that for a teacher to take no action is the worst possible non-response to the victim, poorly trained action can make the problem worse. Thirdly, bullying leads to delinquency in the bullier and the bullied, which can lead to truancy. Fourthly, children are particularly vulnerable when they change schools. Fifthly, and sadly, as has been shown by the case of Katherine Bamber, too often children who are bullied are categorised as over-sensitive children who deserve or select themselves for bullying.

What can be done about the problem? First, it must be recognised that it can be dealt with within the context of schools, but that does not mean that the Government and local education authorities do not have a significant role to play. The Norwegian Government issued guidelines on bullying and instituted an anti-bullying campaign. Within a year, reported bullying fell by 15 per cent. The Scottish Office Education Department issued a support pack for school, "Action Against Bullying", which is having a similarly beneficial effect.

What is being done? Section 22 of the Education Act 1986 talks about the requirement on schools and governors to ensure self-discipline in schools and proper regard by pupils for authority. Indeed, subsection (iii) deals with securing an appropriate standard of behaviour among pupils. Section 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988 deals with the encouragement of the moral and spiritual development of children, which obviously would preclude the consistent bullying that I have been talking about. The Elton committee, which was commissioned by the Government and which reported in 1989 or 1990, said:

"A sense of Community cannot be achieved if a school does not take seriously bad behaviour which mainly affects pupils rather than teachers."

One does not want to leave the matter subject only to statutory declarations, codes of conduct and platitudes. I am delighted to see that the Government are taking the matter seriously, and that earlier this week the Under-Secretary of State who will reply to the debate emphasised the importance of ensuring that Her Majesty's chief inspector insisted that the inspectors who, under the Education (Schools) Act 1992, will inspect schools, should look specifically for anti-bullying policies in schools.

I am delighted, too, that the Government have set in hand a study by a Sheffield academic—Mr. Peter Smith. The study will report in 1994 and examine the strategies that schools should adopt to minimise bullying. It was interesting that a survey carried out by Mr. Smith revealed that 27 per cent. of children in primary school were bullied.

Over the past month and a half, the Gulbenkian Foundation, together with British Telecom, has distributed a significant pack to every school in the country. I was also pleased that, in 1989, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who was then Secretary of State for Education and Science, stressed the importance in teacher training of the management of pupil behaviour.

That is all very good, and I am sure that many education authorities and schools have codes of discipline. But those codes are not specific enough. We want anti-bullying codes, as well as generalised discipline codes, to be instituted in every school in the country where there is a significant probability that bullying may exist. Sadly, that appears to include most of them.

What should the codes contain? There is no shortage of advice on the subject. Organisations such as Kidscape and the anti-bullying campaign, and the Advisory Committee on Education, and the BBC—through the programme "That's Life", which has done valuable work in highlighting the problems of bullying in schools—have all produced details of good strategies for dealing with the problem, and there are the instances of good practice from schools throughout the country. So what, broadly, should the codes contain?

First, schools should be able to identify the signs of bullying, which are not always physical. The child may play truant, or show reluctance to talk to his peers or to teachers, and develop a generally withdrawn personality.

Secondly, teachers must be aware that they act in loco parentis while children are at school, and must therefore put as much emphasis on the pastoral as on the academic curriculum. The duty must not be left to year tutors. Every teacher in every school has an obligation at every moment that he or she is in the school to ensure that bullying does not take place. In particular, children who have recently moved to the school, whom the research suggests are especially vulnerable, should be kept under surveillance.

Thirdly, playground practice is important. School dinner ladies and playground assistants should all be aware of the kind of problems that bullying causes. Fourthly, communication is crucial in preventing bullying and giving children the confidence to report incidents. School questionnaires have been suggested and successfully adopted. School councils, and appropriate prefect systems, can give children the feeling that there is someone they can approach if they are bullied.

There is also role play, and theatre in education. An excellent scheme is now going on in Birmingham under the auspices of Language Alive—although sadly, the local education authority seems intent on dismembering that organisation, which has done much valuable work, especially talking about racial abuse with ethnic minorities in inner city schools. I hope that Birmingham education authority will review its decision to dismember Language Alive—for the sake of its valuable work against bullying, if for no other reason.

It is also important to develop a strategy to deal with bullying once it is identified. That would include not only in-school strategies, but strategies to ensure that pupils who have to be suspended go to appropriate places in other schools rather than being sent back to the schools in which they have perpetrated bullying.

Most importantly, such a programme would create in every school a profound anti-bullying ethos. That will allow children to know that, if they are bullied, the schools are receptive to hearing about their misfortunes and to taking effective action which will not be counter-productive.

I ask the Government two questions. First, will they bring forward the date on which they expect to receive the

[Mr. Coombs]

conclusions of the academic survey to which I referred? it is ridiculous to wait until 1994 to tackle an urgent problem. Secondly—to be fair, the Minister hinted at this in his press release earlier this week—will the Department, like the Scottish Office, produce distinct guidelines for local education authorities and for individual schools, whether grant-maintained or under LEA aegis, as quickly as possible to give schools a feeling of urgency in dealing with the problem?

Such measures would be consistent with the important comments of the new Secretary of State for Education in his first few days in office about the moral curriculum of schools, about discipline and about combating truancy. More importantly than anything, such measures would do a great deal to prevent the misery and appalling blight on the lives of children who are bullied, and who find as a result that what should be the best days of their lives are often made a living hell.

10.51 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) to speak?

Mr. Anthony Coombs *indicated assent.*

Mr. Steen: I thank my hon. Friend the Member the Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) for raising an important subject. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) here. His interest in these matters is well known.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Wyre Forest mentioned the excellent national charity Kidscape, which has advocated a practical anti-bullying programme for some years. In schools in which the programme has been in effect, bullying has been reduced by between 35 per cent. and 60 per cent. Intervention can work.

I am also glad that Kidscape was mentioned, because it publishes a free 20-page booklet called "Stop Bullying". It is full of good ideas for parents, children and teachers and for tackling bullying. Every schoolchild in the country should consider getting one of those booklets.

Every school should have a stated anti-bullying policy and practical ways in which to help the bullies and to protect the victims. Professor Olweus, who was mentioned by my hon. Friend, found in a long-term study that 60 per cent. of men characterised as bullies from the age of 12 had at least one criminal conviction by the age of 24, and that 35 per cent. to 40 per cent. of them had three or more criminal convictions.

Will the Minister tell us whether he believes that we could have a national anti-bullying campaign so that bullying in our schools is reduced dramatically, for the sake of the bullies as much as for the sake of the victims?

10.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Eric Forth): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) on securing this debate, although I acknowledge immediately the tragic circumstances that have occasioned it. I join him in expressing our condolences to the family of Katharine Bamber and our sympathy for the great ordeal that they have suffered over the past few weeks. It is sad that it is her death that has given rise to this debate, but perhaps what emerges from it will be positive. That in turn may give some comfort to her family and all who knew her.

Typically, my hon. Friend brought out most of the salient features of this difficult problem. With so little time left, I do not want to reiterate them, but I want to emphasise that the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 explicitly laid on head teachers responsibility for maintaining high standards of discipline and behaviour in schools. Among other things, the Act spells out that head teachers are required to determine measures aimed at

"(i) promoting, among pupils, self-discipline and proper regard for authority;

(ii) encouraging good behaviour on the part of pupils;

(iii) securing that the standard of behaviour of pupils is acceptable; and

(iv) otherwise regulating the conduct of pupils."

In exercising that responsibility, head teachers are required to follow any written statement of general principles provided for them by the governing body, or any guidance offered on particular matters. Where governors have not already done so, I urge them to consider the need to give their head teachers specific guidance on bullying. That is in line with my hon. Friend's request. They might also ask head teachers for regular reports on standards of behaviour and discipline in their schools and include reference to school policies in their annual report to parents.

There is also a great deal of scope for parents to demand and expect of their governors and head teachers that they codify their approach to this problem to meet the requirements of the 1986 Act and then include them in the annual reporting that schools are obliged to carry out through their governors to parents.

It goes without saying that parents also have a vital part to play in encouraging their children to report to them when bullying takes place. Head teachers and teachers generally are obliged to provide in schools an environment in which youngsters who suffer from this scourge are encouraged to report it, in confidence if necessary, so that effective action may be taken.

My hon. Friend did not overlook the key role that Her Majesty's inspectors have to play in dealing with this matter. Nor should we forget that in 1989 the Elton report dealt with this matter in fairly general terms and provided a useful basis on which to move forward. The advice in that report holds good today.

The Government are taking other and continuing action in this matter. Most importantly, I will ask the new HMCI to ensure that all inspecting teams appointed under the Schools Act 1992 pay particular attention to the arrangements for securing good discipline and behaviour. We intend that schools should be inspected every four years: this is more regular inspection than ever before. The inspectorate now has a firm foundation from which to identify where the problem exists in schools and to go on to indentify for heads and governors and my Department what needs to be done.

In the meantime, the inspectorate will be revising and updating its report on "Good Behaviour and Discipline in Schools", first published in 1987. The report looks at some of the ways by which schools with high standards of discipline and behaviour have achieved them, so that others might learn from what the best schools already do.

I am looking urgently at the recently issued Scottish Office documentation on bullying, which may prove useful for schools south of the border.

In 1991, my predecessor commissioned research costing £174,000 aimed at developing practical strategies to combat bullying. The aim is to produce materials for national use—exactly what my hon. Friend wanted. A team from Sheffield university with considerable experience in this field is carrying out the work, which should be completed in August 1993.

Although I heard what my hon. Friend has requested and will reconsider the matter, I would be reluctant to hurry this work in any way that might prejudice its quality or usefulness. I would rather the work was conducted in a methodical way, so that its results will be more reliable and more useful. I will see whether it is possible to speed it up, and I ask my hon. Friend to leave that with me. The results are in any event due a full year before he thought they were due.

My hon. Friend is to be thanked for bringing this important matter to the attention of the House, despite the tragic circumstances that give rise to it. I hope that he will rest assured for the time being that we are in no doubt of the importance of the matter. It is not underestimated, and it has not been neglected. The effort will continue along the lines that I have suggested and in other ways too. The problem needs constant review and action, but I hope that I have been able to assure my hon. Friend, and my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis)——

Mr. Steen: And for South Hams.

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend spoke in the debate, so I did not need to mention him quite so specifically. As I was saying, I hope that my hon. Friends will be reassured that we will continue to give the matter our serious attention so as to find the best way of solving this problem, which can cause such distress to our children and undermine their education——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at one minute past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 22 May 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Legal Aid (Criminal Cases)

9.35 am

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I beg leave to present a petition on legal aid fees in criminal matters. I must declare an interest: I am a solicitor.

The background, which I shall describe briefly, is the erosion of coverage of legal aid, where legal advice and assistance was to be removed from asylum and immigration cases. Last year legal aid practitioners were offered an increase in their hourly rates of only 1 per cent., which, self-evidently, is much below the increase paid to anyone else. It is also against the background of a number of miscarriages of justice which have besmirched the British legal system.

The petition reads:

To the Honourable House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the people of England and Wales sheweth that:

We wish to register strong protest at the Government's proposal to introduce fixed fees for legal aid in criminal cases. We wish to register strong protest at the proposed increase in legal aid fees of only 3 per cent. from April 1992. These proposals may cause solicitors to withdraw from the legal aid scheme and from duty solicitor schemes at courts and police stations thereby increasing the likelihood of more cases of miscarriage of justice and reducing the people's entitlement to access to justice and to legal advice and representation.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House delay the introduction of fixed fees until the Royal Commission on Justice has reported; seek to reinforce the legal aid scheme and ensure its proper funding and further ensure that all lawyers who undertake legal aid work receive fair remuneration for their services to ensure proper access to justice for all.

The petition is supported by the signatures of about 32,000 people, mostly non-lawyers.

To lie upon the Table.

BILL PRESENTED

SEA FISH (CONSERVATION)

Mr. Secretary Gummer, supported by Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang and Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to licences under Sections 4 and 4A of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Tuesday 2 June and to be printed. [Bill 10.]

MoD Establishment (Harrogate)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

9.37 am

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I am most grateful for this opportunity to raise a matter of very great importance to the town of Harrogate in my constituency and more especially to the people whose jobs depend on the Ministry of Defence establishment there. I am particularly grateful to see on the Treasury Bench my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) because a number of employees who are employed at the Ministry of Defence establishment live outside the boundaries of my constituency. I am grateful to him for finding time to be here for part of this debate.

My hon. Friends the Members for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) have supported me in the efforts that I have been making to retain the Ministry of Defence establishment. They regret that they are unable to be here this morning, owing to their constituency commitments.

The establishment is commonly called the Ministry of Defence in St. George's road by local people in Harrogate. I recognise that its technical title is the Support Management Group, which is within the department of the Air Member for Supply and Organisation. It does not form part of the Procurement Executive, though part of its function is to undertake some procurement work.

All this sounds very confusing. It is even more confusing because it is bound up with the RAF Logistics organisation. None the less, the work at the Ministry of Defence establishment is important and recognised as crucial to the back-up for RAF aircraft. I appeal to the Minister to give departments and their tentacles rational and recognisable titles. More confusion arises from the appointment of two air commodores to operate command at the establishment.

Some time ago we were delighted when the then Secretary of State for Defence, George Younger, made time to visit the establishment. I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) for the close interest that he took in the establishmnent when he was the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement in the previous Parliament. The same can be said of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), who, as Secretary of State, made it clear that he would look very closely at any proposals to move jobs from the north to the south. He emphasised to me that about 300 different moves are involved in the review process. I can understand the difficulties that my right hon. Friend the Minister experiences with so many hon. Members having different parts of the procurement division in their constituencies. Their natural inclination, like mine, is to ensure that their establishment stays where it is.

The review is entirely right and proper. Our defence commitments have been reduced by the changed circumstances of the world. There is no doubt that staff at the Ministry of Defence fully accept and understand that our forces must be scaled down to meet our reduced commitments. The reduction in defence expenditure is welcome as it will enable us to spend more on social priorities, but we must exercise prudent care in shaping our defence forces to ensure that we can respond to

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circumstances that we may not be able to foresee precisely. Circumstances change and we live in a world that is full of surprises and sometimes horrors.

Our role in NATO is enormously important. I have always fervently believed that NATO is the cornerstone of western defence and that it must remain so, particularly because of the link that it establishes with north America and Canada. I am sure that we shall have the opportunity on many occasions to restate the role of NATO and to emphasise the need to maintain our defences to ensure that we are not caught out.

Harrogate has enjoyed the presence of the Ministry of Defence for a long time. When the establishment came to Harrogate after the war, it quickly became part of the town. Employees soon were loyal to Harrogate and it is a posting which is favoured by mobile grades and by service men, who come and go. Some 1,250 civilians and 315 service men work at the establishment, which is the largest single employer in Harrogate. We have a number of employers involved in a diverse range of industries and commerce, but we are particularly proud of the long and important links that we have had with civil servants in the Ministry of Defence and other sections of government.

The Ministry of Defence's buildings are outdated. Temporary and shortlisted buildings have withstood more than their fair test of time. I am arguing not for retention of the present site or occupation of present buildings but for keeping jobs in Yorkshire and in the vicinity of Harrogate.

A review conducted by the previous Labour Government proposed moving the establishment to Glasgow. We resisted that move and, thankfully, it was scuttled when we took office in 1979. Instead, staff were moved from Glasgow to Harrogate. I am eternally grateful to the Ministers who took that decision as it reinforced Harrogate's position and gave staff a sense of security about their long-term future.

The present review once again threatens to move the establishment from Harrogate. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will say something about the review and its progress. I know that much has been done and is being done to reach a decision. It was originally to be made in the spring, but there was a delay and it was announced that it would be made in the early summer. Summer seems to be early this year, but I must press my right hon. Friend to accept that the uncertainty for civilian employees in the non-mobile grades is causing much anxiety. I hope that he will say today at least that consultation with the employees' organisations and unions will start as soon as possible once options have been decided. Consultation is most important. We are talking about the livelihoods of employees and their families, the education of their children and the arrangements that they have to make for where they live.

The review involves departments in Gloucestershire, London, RAF Brampton, near Huntingdon, RAF Wyton in Cambridgeshire and at High Wycombe. Conservative Members representing those areas are no doubt making pleas to retain the presence of the Ministry of Defence, in its various forms, in their areas. The locations that I have mentioned are all in the south, but the largest unit is the one in Harrogate. The cost of moving non-mobile grades must be taken into account and I hope that that will be underlined in the review.

We see ourselves in Harrogate as being very much in competition with RAF Wyton. Rumours fly around and people have the impression that there is a major competition between ourselves and RAF Wyton. I admire my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and if he wanted help I would give it to him unreservedly, but his majority is the largest in the country—36,230. I do not think that he needs the assistance of extra jobs for his constituency. We know, however, that he can stand on his own feet and on his own record.

My area has many military connections. HMS Forest Moor, a small and unknown branch of the Royal Navy, is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon. It deals with communications in our area. The Army Apprentices college is on the boundary of my constituency and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon. We are both overjoyed that it will be retained as a military establishment and will take on board the Junior Leaders Regiment. That is good news; it keeps jobs in the area.

However, there are three services—the Navy, the Army and the RAF. The RAF presence in my constituency at the Ministry of Defence establishment completes the services representation. A variety of defence sites are therefore available. Even beyond the close boundaries of the Harrogate constituency there is RAF Linton-on-Ouse and the army bases at Catterick. I have no doubt that there is sufficient land, and there are buildings which could certainly be made available as a relocation point for the Ministry of Defence establishment. Will my right hon. Friend tell us how many sites have been considered in the review and where they are located in the Harrogate area?

The St. Georges road site is a valuable one and when the time comes to redevelop, I hope that priority will be given to commercial or office accommodation in order to retain jobs in the area. It is a prestigious point close to the centre of Harrogate and there are a number of uses to which the site could be put.

If one considers its national position, strategically Harrogate must offer the best solution as it is at the heart of the United Kingdom. It has excellent rail and road links, superb schools and an environment of unequalled quality. I do not doubt the enthusiasm of the people who are asked to move to Harrogate once they have seen and know the area.

Jobs are important to us. Jobs have recently been lost at National Power which last year announced that it would be making people redundant at its offices in Harrogate. Of course, that is to be regretted, but all thinking people understand that companies must make their own decisions. The record shows that in March 1990 there were 922 jobs at National Power in Harrogate. In March 1991 the number increased to 1,063 and at the end of March this year the number had fallen to 769. They are important jobs and I am delighted that National Power is retaining its offices in Harrogate even on a reduced basis.

ICI's research fibres division at Hornbeam park recently announced that it was closing down and that there would be 200 job losses as a result of the closure. ICI has had a long and historic connection with Harrogate. Over the years it expanded and then reduced its research fibres

division. It has now made a rational decision and, as I said in relation to National Power, we of course regret the loss of jobs at that great company.

One good point is that many of the buildings vacated have been re-occupied by other smaller firms which have come to Harrogate and which provide jobs. Some of the offices have now become our college of art and technology.

Harrogate has an unemployment rate of 4·6 per cent. The figure is 8·4 per cent. in Leeds and 5·9 per cent. in York, so we are relatively lucky. We do not deny that, but we live in a competitive world and we must fight to get and to hold every job that we can. It is always our intention to encourage industry to expand and new companies to come to Harrogate and the surrounding areas, and that is one of Harrogate's great strengths.

Harrogate has been fortunate in that the Government whom I am proud to support have moved jobs from the London area to the north. Two departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are moving and the first—the central science laboratory—is due to relocate in 1996 to Sand Hutton in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale. Four hundred posts are due to be moved there and about 150 to 200 staff will have to be recruited locally, which is a plus. The move involves mainly scientists. Departments within the headquarters division of the Ministry dealing with pesticide safety, plant health, statistics, personnel, establishment work and finance will be located in York city centre in 1994. About 600 posts will be involved and 300 are expected to be recruited locally.

The Department of Health is also moving staff from the south to Leeds. The move will involve the national health service management executive, more or less in its entirety. Between 1,100 and 1,200 posts are to be relocated. Support services are not being relocated but are being put out to contract, which is a good thing because it is thought that between 100 and 200 support service jobs will be created in the area for local people.

The Department of Social Security is also moving with the Department of Health and, in this case, the whole of the Benefits Agency is coming to Leeds. Seven hundred and ninety one posts are being moved to Leeds, including a range of executive and clerical grades together with senior management posts. The figure does not include support services which will add another 40 local jobs and thus create new jobs for local people.

It has been the Government's policy—rightly so—to decant jobs from the south, or from London, to the north so that there is a better balance of civil service jobs in the north. We value that and it would be a great pity—indeed, a tragedy—if that policy were reversed and a decision made to relocate the Ministry of Defence establishment in another part of the country.

We have a long and historical connection with the Ministry of Defence. We pride ourselves on the fact that our workers at the Ministry of Defence are dedicated, hard working and efficient. They are deeply rooted in the area as they have been there for many years. Their families are there and the sons of some employees now also work in the establishment so there is a family continuity. Above all, the establishment is our largest and, therefore, our most important and valued employer.

I plead with the Minister to ensure that we keep the Ministry of Defence jobs in Yorkshire and that the RAF retains its presence in the Harrogate area. We in the north will be ever grateful to the Ministry and to my right hon. Friend for the close consideration that we know he will give to the points that I have raised. I hope that he will be able to say something about the progress of the review and how we are to regard the future, which is very important for us all.

It will not be an easy decision. It is very important that we have the fullest possible consultation and openness of government on the issue. If it is a straight battle, which it may or may not be, between Harrogate and RAF Wyton, I can say only that we will bend over backwards to show that we can provide the work force and, I am sure, a site and buildings which can be adapted. Our services are wholly available to the Minister in his quest for the right location. There can be no doubt about that.

I hope that the Minister will take my words on board and will be able to give us some advice today that will point the way to the decisions—painful though those decisions will have to be for many people in different parts of the country. I hope that we shall hear something about that now.

9.59 am

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) on being successful in the ballot for subjects for debate today, and I am grateful for this opportunity to clarify for the House the nature and purpose of the studies that have been under way for some time into the future organisation of RAF Logistics. Because the Ministry of Defence and RAF staff at Harrogate play such an important part in the management of RAF Logistics, the studies clearly have to encompass the future of the site.

The Ministry of Defence at Harrogate employs some 300 service and 1,200 civilian staff and provides the single largest collocated element of the support management organisation. The task of this organisation is to provide the logistic support necessary to underwrite the RAF's operational capability and, as a result of rationalised arrangements, the operational capability of the Army Air Corps and Fleet Air Arm. Support is also provided to some overseas Governments who have purchased British defence equipment. The organisation provides aircraft fleet and inventory management, draws up maintenance and supply policy and manages the provision, procurement and management of spares, modifications, and the repair of equipments and components. It does not itself carry the functions of aircraft and component repair and overhaul, or spares manufacture. Its suppliers are the Maintenance Defence Support Agency—a part of RAF support command—the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation and, predominantly, private industry. There are, however, significant elements of the organisation not currently based in Harrogate. As my hon. Friend said, the reorganisation will affect people located in several different parts of the country—people based in London, at the RAF headquarters strike command High Wycombe and RAF support command at Brampton, and people who work with specialist staffs at RAF Swanton Morley in Norfolk, RAF Stanbridge in Bedfordshire, and at Glasgow and Liverpool. The task of the studies under way is to design and identify the most efficient and effective structure and location for the long-term future of the support

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management organisation, bringing it into balance with the reductions in the front line which have already been announced.

I remind the House that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), then Secretary of State for Defence, announced on 25 July 1990 the outline structure of British forces for the future. Further details were set out in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" published on 9 July 1991. For the RAF, the closures of the stations at Wildenrath and Gutersloh in Germany have been announced and, indeed, most of their squadrons have been disbanded or relocated already. Cessation of flying at RAF Wattisham has been announced and its Phantom squadrons will be disbanded later this year. Flying will also cease at RAF Honnington and RAF regiment units are to be relocated from West Raynham, Catterick and Hullavington as the number of RAF regiment squadrons reduces.

On the support side, the maintenance unit at Abingdon is to close later this year, the flying training school at Church Fenton is changing to a relief landing ground and flying training is to cease at RAF Brawdy. Further closures and rationalisations in ground training, maintenance, supply and movements will be announced and made in due course and there is a continuing programme of closure for RAF stations used by the United States Air Force in this country.

In those circumstances, it is necessary for us to review and streamline the logistics management organisation and associated MOD headquarters functions to meet the needs of the new front line and supporting units: it would be quite wrong of us not to do so. Indeed, if we did not, we could not undertake to provide the well-equipped and well-trained front line for 1990s and beyond which the Government have promised. The Government have therefore made it clear that they seek substantial savings in the support area, at least proportionate to the reductions in the front line. As part of that, we approved last year the recommendations of a study—known as the PROSPECT study—on the future size and structure of the Ministry of Defence and its relationships with the commands. The recommendations that are being implemented include headquarters manpower savings at all levels of at least 20 per cent. and significant relocation of posts out of London. The object of the changes is to reduce substantially the MOD's overheads and streamline its working practices, consistent with the reductions in our front-line strengths, the opportunities opened by the Department's new management strategy and the application of new information technology. At a time of such change in our armed forces following the momentous international developments of recent years, we owe it to them and to the public at large to produce a leaner and more responsive MOD.

Central to the study's recommendations was the principle that only small, core headquarters should be retained in London, with the remaining functions being redeployed. For the RAF, the report recommended in particular that the staffs of the Air Member for Supply and Organisation—within whose department are the majority of the staffs currently based at Harrogate—should move out of London and, together with associated elements of RAF support command, chiefly the Maintenance Defence Support Agency, form a logistics command located at the current RAF support command headquarters at Brampton, near Huntingdon. On formation of the new command, the separate appointments of AMSO and air officer commanding in chief support command would be abolished. As a consequence of these changes, it is clear that there will be significant relocation of staff to the Brampton area. The object of the studies now under way has been to establish the best long-term locations for the remainder of the staffs in other parts of the new logistics command, which are not already located in the Brampton area. As I have already said, they are predominantly in London, at Harrogate, High Wycombe, RAF Stanbridge and RAF Swanton Morley.

It is clear that, to meet the challenging targets for efficiency which we have set, we shall need to exploit to the maximum the opportunities for the collocation and integration of service and civilian staffs. This will enable us to reduce the management overhead and, with the use of modern management techniques and information technology, improve the quality of decision taking. The RAF is already embarked upon a major update of its logistics information systems—many of which date from the late 1960s and early 1970s—known as the logistics information technology strategy, or—to use one of the acronyms which the MOD loves—LITS. Also, following a fundamental review of the management of supply and engineering in the late 1980s, RAF support management now operates on the basis of multi-discipline groups, which combine engineering, supply, procurement and financial disciplines into project teams. These are already showing their worth, but full integration, which we must achieve to exploit fully the opportunities of new technology and new working practices, has been hampered by the current dispersed nature of the organisation. The PROSPECT study, which these reforms preceded, provides an opportunity, unlikely to recur, of overcoming this drawback and achieving substantial long-term benefits.

We recognise, however, that such collocation and integration will be disruptive and potentially costly in the short term. Consequently, all available options for the long-term location of all elements of the new logistics command are the subject of intensive and exhaustive study. Although it is clear that there are no options which do not involve relocation, we need to take into account the costs of reproviding office accommodation, domestic accommodation for service personnel who will remain an essential part of the command, relocation of civilian staff, the provision of information technology, the availability of suitably qualified staff, and their training, together with local housing and transport needs. We also need to investigate the opportunities for making the best use of the current defence estate and minimise expensive reprovision of new buildings. With an extensive drawdown in the defence estate under way, there has clearly been a wide range of potential solutions.

From an early stage, however, it has been evident to all concerned that the solutions fall into one of two broad categories: a northern solution, which my hon. Friend suggested, based on the current site at Harrogate, and an East Anglian solution, centred on the current headquarters site at Brampton. Each option will have its advocates and my hon. Friend has been most eloquent in putting forward the virtues of an outcome based at Harrogate.

The Harrogate solution would have the advantage of a large resident work force. However, it would require relocation northward of significant numbers of RAF and civilian specialist staff, and reprovision and expansion of the current buildings which, as my hon. Friend accepts, are almost 50 years old and coming to the end of their economic life. As part of this, we are also studying the possible use of spare capacity at RAF training stations in the area. A solution in the Brampton area would require more relocation, but over shorter distances for many of the specialists involved. Brampton is very close to the RAF station at Wyton, which has significant potential for reuse and is generally well maintained. I take my hon. Friend's point that it is in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Ambitious as I am, that has not been one of the factors that has made us consider Wyton as a serious candidate. I assure the House that every option is subject to the most stringent and rigorous operational and economic analysis.

We would, however, ignore qualitative factors at our peril, and I am fully aware of the Department's obligations to its work force. I should like to pay in particular a tribute to the loyalty, dedication and skill of the civilian staff who have always played a major role in the provision of RAF Logistics. They are well aware that major studies are under way into the future of RAF Logistics which will affect both their personal and professional lives.

I am determined that, while we must achieve the efficient provision of the very best logistic support for the RAF for the 1990s and beyond, in doing so we shall also seek to provide a promising and rewarding professional life for those who seek a career in the area. But there will undoubtedly be short-term disruption for some. While we can agree on the appropriateness and need for smaller armed forces, the streamlining of their support, and a smaller proportion of our national wealth being spent on defence, those aims will not be achieved without disruptions and possibly redundancy for some and temporary damage to local economies where establishments are closed.

Whatever the outcome of the recommendations, everything possible will be done to minimise the adverse effects on our employees. Staff in grades with a mobility obligation would, where appropriate, be transferred at public expense and transfers to other Government Departments or MOD establishments would be investigated fully, especially for staff in grades with no mobility obligation. The MOD would establish close contact with employers in areas affected, including other Government Departments which may have relocation plans of their own which offer opportunities for co-ordination. Any staff leaving prematurely under voluntary or compulsory redundancy terms would have available the services of the MOD counselling service and would be compensated under the terms of the appropriate pension scheme.

I am conscious that continued uncertainty for those potentially involved a source of anxiety—a point made strongly by my hon. Friend—and I hope soon to make public our proposals as a basis for consultation. We shall not make a final decision on the way ahead without taking into account all the relevant factors and without a proper period of consultation. In particular, I assure the House that the recommendations will be subject to the full consultative procedures agreed between the Department and the trades unions.

Textile and Clothing Industries

10.13 am

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I am extremely pleased to be able to introduce this short debate on the impact of the general agreement on tariffs and trade on the British textile and clothing industries. Before I do so, I take this first opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. As a fellow Yorkshire Member, I hope that you have a long, successful and happy tenure in your office, which is very well deserved.

I also declare an interest as a sponsored Member of the Transport and General Workers Union. I take an especial pleasure in representing the TGWU textiles group which represents many thousands of men and women throughout the United Kingdom who depend for their livelihoods on the British textile and clothing industries.

When I applied for the debate, I did not imagine that it would be as timely as it has proved to be. Only yesterday, in the aftermath of the apparent agreement on agriculture by European Community Agriculture Ministers, a number of hon. Members of all parties pressed for a Government statement on the future of the GATT round. This debate allows the Minister to give the House, the industry and the general public some idea about the current position of the GATT round and about the prospects for a successful conclusion to the GATT negotiations.

The negotiations are now 18 months behind schedule. The main obstacle and difficulty in the negotiations has been agreement on agriculture. Many in the textile and clothing industries are extremely concerned about the apparent priority given to agriculture compared with that given to the textile and clothing industries. In sheer economic terms, the textile and clothing industries are far more important. The output of the British textile and clothing industries is £15 billion compared with £13·4 billion for agriculture. In exports, the figures are £4·5 billion compared with £2·6 billion and in employment, the figures are 420,000 compared with 262,000.

In recent years, agriculture seems to have enjoyed by far the greater attention of all concerned. The December 1990 GATT conference in Brussels, which was designed to agree a conclusion, broke up without agreement, mainly because of differences on agriculture. After further negotiations in December 1991, the GATT director-general, Arthur Dunkel, presented a paper setting out suggested conclusions for the round and asking for rapid agreement. The EC refused to accept the paper because the section on agriculture was unacceptable to it and since then, negotiations on agriculture between the EC and the United States have continued without agreement. Other sections of the Dunkel paper, including those relevant to textiles, have been put on ice until the disagreements on agriculture are resolved. Once that happens, there are other loose ends to be tied up, notably services and tariff reduction negotations.

Throughout the period, the main concern seems to have been agriculture, at the expense of textiles and clothing and of other sectors of industry and services. The apparent importance given to agriculture highlights the worries that continue to exist in the British textile and clothing industries about how those industries are perceived by British Ministers and civil servants, by European Commissioners and EC bureaucrats and by competing textile and clothing industries around the world. There are

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lingering suspicions among those who work in the British industries that they do not count and that they are not really rated. They fear that they are seen by many Ministers and British civil servants as boring whingers. Whenever the subject of British textiles and clothing comes up, Ministers and officials tend to stare at the ceiling or at their imported silk socks. Sometimes, the industries are depicted as always moaning and their trade and profits are suspected of being a good deal better than they are prepared to let on; at others, they are depicted as old-fashioned and out-of-date industries desperately seeking total protection from the winds of free trade and free competition.

British Ministers must do their best permanently to sweep away those suspicions and the best way of doing that is by taking positive action to instil confidence in the minds of all those who work in the industries that the British Government are pledged to do all that they can to defend the industries' interests and to promote them overseas. Ministerial rhetoric has failed miserably to do that over the years.

It is vital that the Government show their support for the British textile and clothing industries, and action is necessary on a number of fronts. First, and most important, the British textile and clothing industries must be placed at the heart of the revival of British manufacturing. It is most important that the Government's trade, economic and fiscal policies all give positive support to British manufacturing in general and to the textile and clothing industries in particular.

The Minister will be aware of the grave misgivings felt not only in the textile and clothing industries but throughout British industry about the present and future role of his Department. Many of us believe that, unfortunately, as Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry, Mr. Nicholas Ridley and the present Secretary of State for Social Security presided over the demise of their own Department. Until recently, that great Department gave the impression that it had shut up shop, that it took no interest in the future of British manufacturing industry and that it was entirely unwilling to intervene on behalf of British manufacturing or to promote and defend its interests.

All that has changed because of the great promise that the present Secretary of State carries with him. During his attempts to become leader of the Conservative party and subsequently, he has been seen as a disciple—indeed, an evangelist—of British manufacturing. I know that the House is deserted on this occasion, but our debates are read with considerable interest. I hope, therefore, that the Minister will take this opportunity to share with us the Department's thinking—and, in particular, the thinking of the Secretary of State—about the reorganisation of the Department and to tell us what attitude the Department will adopt to British manufacturing in future. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be able to tell us, for example, that the conclusion is rapidly being reached that it is high time that the Department established a division with direct responsibility for the British textile and clothing industries on a day-to-day basis. That would enable Ministers and officials to build a continuing dialogue with all sections of the industries and to have access to knowledge and expertise in the industries, thus ensuring that their best interests are represented in all places and on all occasions and that a genuine effort is made to assist and to defend them.

Other measures need to be taken and I shall come to GATT in a moment. I take this opportunity to urge the Minister to consider what action his Department can take to promote exports. As I have already said, the British textile and clothing industries have a remarkable export record, but that record could be improved if the Department were prepared to enter real discussions to find ways of promoting and increasing British exports.

I have always wondered why our discussions on the textile and clothing industries are restricted to Adjournment debates and the odd question at Question Time. Hon. Members representing constituencies throughout the United Kingdom have no regular opportunity to question Ministers, to draw to their attention matters of concern and to urge that the Government act to promote this major British industry. I strongly urge that we should have at least an annual debate on the industries to give all hon. Members a proper opportunity to speak up on the industries' behalf, in exactly the same way as other hon. Members have the opportunity to speak on agriculture. There is a regular monthly Question Time on agriculture, and at least one debate a year, and I cannot understand why we still do not have such opportunities to speak about textiles and clothing.

We must look to the Department of Trade and Industry to ensure that its arrangements for monitoring all agreements concerning textiles and clothing, including GATT, are effective and that surveillance is carried out thoroughly and as a matter of urgency.

What of matters affecting the GATT negotiations and discussions? I hope that, following yesterday's agreement, the Minister will be able to give us some clear information about the expected schedule for those negotiations. The Minister will know that there was considerable pleasure when it was agreed that the multi-fibre arrangement would not be phased out in less than 10 years. We must insist on that part of the agreement being maintained and the minimum phase-out period must be firmly linked to the strengthening of GATT rules and disciplines.

It would also help if the Minister could say that, even if good progress is now made in the negotiations, the GATT agreement is unlikely to be concluded and implemented until—most optimistically—the middle of next year and probably until the end of next year. The extension of the MFA—which we were very pleased to obtain—expires in December and it is most important that there should be a further extension, for at least another 12 months. The extension should apply for whatever period is necessary to coincide with the implementation of the full GATT negotiations and agreement.

We are also very anxious about several other issues. There must be a vigorous attack in the GATT market access negotiating group on high tariffs. We are concerned about high tariffs in developing countries and particularly in the United States where the tariff on wool cloth is still 36 per cent. There should be better export opportunities for the United Kingdom industry.

There must be strict enforcement of the current MFA arrangements. New quotas are needed in some cases to deal with damaging import surges and a major assault on fraudulent evasion of quotas, especially by China, should be carried out. We also urge the Minister and the Government to deal with current subsidy problems,

notably in relation to the provision of subsidised raw materials to some of the United Kingdom's competitors. The level playing field that we are seeking remains as elusive as ever. We urge the Minister and the Government to do everything possible to ensure that competition is free and fair.

I said earlier that many people in the textile and clothing industries are thought to be boring whingers. If we are honest, it must be accepted that we have a great deal to be concerned about. There has been a massive reduction in employment in our industries. Half a million people have lost their jobs over the past 20 years. In all, 560,000 jobs have disappeared from every region in the United Kingdom. The most recent figures show that 7,000 jobs are being lost every quarter. We must heavily underline the importance of the textile and clothing industries to the regions.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like me, will be aware of the importance of the textile and clothing industries to Yorkshire and Humberside. However, it is worth stressing that importance. At the moment, 63,000 men and women depend on the industries in Yorkshire and Humberside. That represents 15 per cent. of those employed in the industries throughout the United Kingdom and that is equal to 16 per cent. of manufacturing employment in our region. A similar picture occurs in other regions.

I would like the Minister to tell us something about the current position of the RETEX scheme. As the House will be aware, that scheme is designed to assist textile and clothing firms that want to diversify because of the decline in the industry. I should like to know what the budget for RETEX is likely to be. The Commission was to announce that budget. I contacted the Department yesterday and said that I was today intending to ask for information about the scheme. I hope that the Minister can provide it.

In addition to the amount of money available, there is concern about the availability of RETEX funds. At the moment, it seems that funds will be available only to assisted areas. That would exclude certain areas, even within West Yorkshire, where the textile industry is an important employer and an important part of the local economy. I urge the Minister to consider the matter and to ensure that we consider distribution of RETEX funds to regions rather than areas, so that regions where textiles and clothing are important can benefit from the scheme.

I also informed the Minister that I intended to refer today to pentachlorophenal—PCP—which is a fungicide used on grey, unfinished cloth in Asia and the far east. It is used on cotton when growing and also to prevent mildew during transit. When treated cloth is subsequently bleached, dyed or printed in the United Kingdom, any PCP is removed during the finishing process and discharged into the finisher's waste water.

The finishing industry faces difficulties because the permitted levels of PCP in waste water are restricted to very low levels as a result of EC legislation. Yorkshire Water is examining PCP levels at the moment and some water companies have already advised customers that from 1 July discharges containing PCP will not be accepted.

I understand that there is no known practical way of removing PCP from waste water. The textile finishing industry is currently undertaking a £290,000 research project into the problem. However, because of a delay in obtaining funding from the Department of Trade and Industry, the project is not due to report until June of next year.

The finisher also does not own the grey cloth that he processes. It is owned by his customer. The pressures brought to bear by textile finishers on their customers have cut PCP pollution levels by an estimated 40 to 50 per cent. However, there are still insufficient quantities of grey cloth available that are not treated with PCP.

Customers in this country have up to two years' supply of grey cloth for finishing which has been treated with PCP. Textile companies may be forced to scrap those supplies which are worth millions of pounds, unless there is provision to extend the pollution deadline. I hope that the Minister will give us the Department's view about that problem, because it is clear that a sympathetic approach must be adopted. There is a degree of urgency because of the deadline.

I urge the Minister to take this opportunity to clarify the current position on the GATT negotiations and give us clear assurances that the textile and clothing industries will not be regarded as expendable or as industries whose interests can be traded off to reach an agreement under GATT. All the assurances that have been given about the Government's position on the negotiations should be maintained. I hope that the Minister will assure us that the best interests of the British textile and clothing industry will not be neglected or put on one side by the Government.

10.39 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on his success in securing a debate on a subject which he follows closely and about which he has considerable knowledge. Whenever matters affecting the clothing and textiles industries are considered in the House, he is assiduous in his attendance and in making his full contribution. He has just done so once again and I hope that I will be able, in replying, to cover the main points which he made.

Contrary to what he said about himself, I would never regard the hon. Member for Bradford, West as a boring whinger; far from it. He speaks with great knowledge on textile matters. He raised some technical points. The first was RETEX, which comes under the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry, who is responsible for regional policy. I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to my right hon. Friend's attention. We have not come to a definitive conclusion about RETEX. As the hon. Gentleman will know, many initiatives have been promoted by the European Commission. I believe that RETEX is the eighteenth. When I was responsible for regional policy, we were prepared to consider proposals made by Commissioner Millan in a constructive light. I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister will be interested in the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West also raised the problem of pentachlorophenol. That is a matter principally for my colleagues at the Department of the Environment. I understand the anxiety of the hon. Gentleman as a local Member of Parliament about environmental matters and I have noted the force with which he expressed himself today. I shall ensure that my

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hon. Friend who is responsible for such matters at the Department of the Environment contacts the hon. Gentleman.

Like the hon. Gentleman, I pay tribute to the importance of the textile industry. As he well knows, the textiles and clothing industry is still the United Kingdom's largest employer, with about 390,000 people working in it. The Government attach considerable importance to its health and well-being. It remains a substantial wealth creator, despite the retrenchment in size in past decades. It still accounts for roughly 2 per cent. of total employment in the United Kingdom and almost 9 per cent. of manufacturing employment. It is the fifth largest manufacturing sector in the United Kingdom and one of our main exporters.

I took careful note of what the hon. Gentleman said about the House devoting more time to the textiles industry. I shall certainly be happy to pass his observations on to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. The Department of Trade and Industry attaches enormous importance to the textiles industry. A great deal of time is spent by my officials and those who advise me in ensuring that the Department is a worthy ambassador for one of our greatest and most important industries.

So, by any reckoning, the textiles and clothing industry is of enormous importance to the United Kingdom economy. It has achieved much and has shown very considerable resilience largely because of its skilled and adaptable work force and strengthened management. It has proved itself to be extremely competitive, especially at the quality end of the market. It should also be noted that the industry has made increasing use of new techniques and technologies which have resulted in significant productivity gains. Advances have also been made in design and there is an increasing trend towards specialisation, with companies identifying what they do best and adapting and developing for all they are worth.

All the factors that I have mentioned are important if we are to have a thriving and competitive industry able to respond rapidly to the changing demands of the market place. Output declined in 1989, 1990 and again in 1991 as consumer demand weakened. But this had been preceded by a buoyant period in the sector in the mid-1980s when exports grew strongly and profit growth was above the manufacturing sector average.

The industry's fortunes are closely linked with the consumer market, and measures to slow down demand in the economy have inevitably been reflected in its short-term performance. But the United Kingdom textiles sector has not been unique in experiencing stagnant output growth at the beginning of the 1990s. The picture is similar for most other EC producers.

In 1991 both exports and imports were close to the previous year's levels. Exports were up by 2 per cent. in value terms to £4·7 billion. Indeed, clothing exports have surprised industry observers by their continued strength —in 1991 they were up 13 per cent. over 1990. By contrast, exports of textiles have been a little sluggish—down by 4 per cent. in 1991. Imports of clothing and textiles fell 1 per cent. in 1991.

With improving economic prospects, the industry can now look forward to emerging from a difficult period and building on the strengths developed during the 1980s. Indeed, I was delighted to read in yesterday's *Yorkshire Post* the report of record textile and clothing exports in the first quarter of 1992. Exports exceeded £1·1 billion for the first time ever in this period. In that report Mr. Nightingale of the Apparel, Knitting and Textile Alliance said:

"UK firms are selling internationally on the basis of quality, design, service and value for money."

The hon. Gentleman said that his debate was timely and, of course, it is. *The Times* this morning repeats what we already know from the *Yorkshire Post*. It says that exports of British clothing and textiles in the first quarter of this year jumped 9 per cent. That shows that the hon. Gentleman's debate is timely. This is an appropriate moment to take up the hon. Gentleman's point about the attitude of the industry and our attitude to it. The industry has a positive attitude. The chairman of the Apparel, Knitting and Textile Alliance wrote to the GATT round in February this year:

"So let us press for a determined drive to a successful conclusion which will leave our industry with hope for the future based on a lengthy and orderly phase-out of the present quota arrangements over a reasonable period, being accompanied by greater access to overseas markets and less cheating by our competitors."

So there we see a positive attitude on the part of the AKTA.

As the hon. Gentleman is such an expert on the textiles industry, it is not necessary for me to deal in any great detail with the multi-fibre arrangement, especially as time is short. I shall deal now with the current state of play in GATT. Before I discuss the specific impact of GATT on the textiles and clothing industries, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be interested in an update on developments in the round.

Just before Christmas, the director-general of GATT, Mr. Dunkel, issued his comprehensive draft final act of the Uruguay round. This represented the fruits of five years of hard negotiations. It covered the largest range of issues ever addressed in a single set of trade negotiations. These include further reductions in tariffs and non-tariff barriers, the strengthening of GATT rules on matters such as subsidies and anti-dumping, and improvements to GATT's own procedures, particularly those relating to the settlement of trade disputes. It would bring trade in agricultural products and textiles fully within GATT disciplines. It would also, for the first time, extend GATT rules to trade-related intellectual property rights and trade in services.

This agreement would bring substantial benefits to United Kingdom industry and consumers. It would reduce barriers to our exports, of services as well as goods. It would help to create fairer conditions of competition in international trade. It would reduce the damaging uncertainty which comes about when countries take trade measures unilaterally and it would discourage any tendency towards closed bilateral or regional trade agreements. Perhaps most importantly, it would give a boost to economic growth and confidence just when it is most needed, as the western economies are emerging from recession. The hon. Gentleman does not need me to tell him that, for all the challenges that the process poses for the textiles industry, the GATT round is welcome. I am sure that he echoes those words.

The hon. Gentleman will also agree that if the GATT round failed we should not merely lose the benefits of the agreement; trade problems and disputes which had been in abeyance during the round would emerge again. While the

GATT system would not collapse overnight, confidence in it would be seriously weakened. There would be a loss of business confidence and an increased tendency to resort to protectionism. Countries would start to take the law into their own hands. The result could be the beggar-my-neighbour policies that we saw in the 1930s which had such devastating consequences. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman supports our efforts to achieve agreement and at the same time to be aware of the particular problems faced by the textiles industry.

I am glad to say that all parties to the negotiations—and there are more than 100 of them—have been prepared to work on the basis of Mr. Dunkel's text. Nevertheless, as hon. Members will be aware, a number of problems remain to be resolved before final agreement can be reached. The principal one is agriculture. The hon. Gentleman has rightly made a great play of the subject of agriculture and I understand his point of view.

As is well known, the European Community has difficulties with certain of the proposals in the Dunkel paper. Discussions have continued to try to resolve those, mainly between the European Commission and the United States. An agreement between the EC and the United States is seen as essential to open the way to wider agreement.

I am glad to say that at their recent meeting President Bush and the President of the European Commission, Mr. Delors, reaffirmed their desire for an early settlement in the round. It is a mark of the importance of the round that President Bush, even with the impending election and his domestic concerns, continues to attach such a high priority to it. The British Government welcome that. At that meeting, certain new ideas were exchanged on agriculture, which both sides are now studying. Further meetings at senior level are expected shortly.

We very much hope that those new ideas will make possible an agreement on agriculture. That should be facilitated by the agreement on reform of the EC common agricultural policy, which was reached only yesterday and which the hon. Gentleman alluded to. In turn, that should open the way to resolving the remaining problems in other sectors, most importantly the liberalisation of trade in services and final agreement on the levels of tariff reductions on goods. If the key points can be agreed within the next weeks, it should be possible to conclude the final agreement, including the detailed legal texts, during the following few months.

The hon. Gentleman asked when we might reach a final agreement. I do not know any more than he does, but I hope that we are making good progress. The gap between the two sides is now very narrow and agreement is within reach. The United Kingdom believes very strongly that the overriding priority should be a good overall agreement. Given the potential benefits and the cost of failure, no issue should be allowed to stand in the way of that. Completing and, as necessary, expediting that work will of course be a high priority for our presidency of the European Community, starting in July.

That brings me, in the last nine minutes of my remarks, to the impact of the Uruguay round on the textiles and clothing industries, which is the issue that concerns the hon. Gentleman. International trade in textiles and clothing products is not subject to the rules and disciplines of GATT. Indeed, it is one of the few areas of international trade that are not covered by the GATT umbrella. However, a successful conclusion to the Uruguay round would include an agreement on textiles trade, which would be brought under the disciplines of GATT and would involve the progressive phase-out of the MFA.

The GATT director-general's draft final act includes a draft agreement on textiles. It will involve the integration of textile and clothing trade into GATT over a period of 10 years, as the hon. Gentleman mentioned. I can now go into more detail. On a periodic basis—at least once every two years—developed countries will be obliged to identify a range of textiles and clothing products, by customs tariff headings, which will be plucked out of the MFA and integrated into GATT. What that means basically is that those products will no longer be subject to quantitative restrictions. By progressively integrating more and more products into the GATT, the MFA will gradually be phased out. That process will be complemented by progressive annual increases in the size of quotas for those products to be integrated into GATT at a later stage.

I should underline—this will interest the hon. Gentleman—that the phase-out of the MFA will be a carefully managed and monitored affair. Aside from the fact that it will take up to 10 years to phase out all quotas, even when a product has been integrated into GATT, the agreement gives provision for safeguard action to be taken against imports that threaten injury to domestic production. I know that the hon. Gentleman will take careful note of that. It is important for those of us, myself included, who are anxious to ensure adequate protection. In other words, quotas can be reimposed on goods integrated into GATT if they are threatening to damage our home industry. The proposed agreement on trade in textiles and clothing also establishes a body and mechanism through which trade disputes between members can be discussed and resolved.

However, phasing out the MFA is only part of the story. Ever since the Uruguay round negotiations began, the United Kingdom Government and the European Community, as well as most other western industrialised countries, have been ready to negotiate the return of trade in textiles and clothing to GATT only in return for strengthened rules and disciplines affecting how all GATT contracting parties, including developing countries, behave in their trading policies. That is another key point which I am sure the hon. Gentleman will support, and it is the level playing field in trade that we all, especially the hon. Gentleman, wish to promote.

The United Kingdom textiles and clothing industries have strongly urged and supported the so-called linkage between MFA phase-out and strengthened rules and disciplines. So what do they—and we as a Government—make of the total GATT package now emerging?

There have been some real achievements. There are satisfactory proposals for enhancing GATT's dispute settlement mechanism and the requirements placed upon the most advanced developing countries to adhere more closely to their GATT obligations. There has been useful, if not perfect—I accept that it is not perfect—progress in three key areas of interest to the United Kingdom industry: subsidies, safeguards and anti-dumping.

We and the United Kingdom industry have long been concerned about the potentially trade-distorting effect of overseas Governments' subsidies, but the difficulty has been to get internationally agreed restraints over the most damaging of them. The Uruguay round is starting down that road. The draft agreement seeks to categorise subsidies according to their trade-distorting effect, eliminating direct export subsidies and others which

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clearly distort or impede trade, while permitting those domestic subsidies which demonstrably have no such effect. Any other subsidies would be actionable under the new subsidies code negotiated in GATT. I hope that that reassures the hon. Gentleman on the subject of subsidies.

Mr. Madden: As the Chamber is rapidly filling up with farmers, I am grateful that I made my remarks on agriculture earlier. Before the Minister concludes, can he answer the one specific question that I asked: when will the Government announce whether the MFA is to be extended beyond December? That is very important for confidence within the British industry.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman is rightly concerned about confidence. The Government would not embark on any course of action that would lead to any lack of confidence. We are negotiating, and we are bound by our partners and colleagues in the European Community, but I have noted what the hon. Gentleman has said. As we are in the middle of negotiations, I am not in a position to give an absolute answer to the hon. Gentleman, but I can assure him that the moment that we can make an announcement we shall do so. We are aware of the need to promote confidence in the industry and to assure it that we are dealing with an evolutionary process. The GATT round and the MFA process have been evolutionary and we have always tried to ensure adequate protection for industry and adequate warning of any changes. I think that the hon. Gentleman will realise from what I have said that there are grounds for considerable confidence. It appears that, thanks to the considerable success achieved by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—who is now sitting beside me—which I am sure that the House welcomes, we now hope to proceed to a satisfactory conclusion of the GATT round.

The degree of discipline to be imposed is, to be frank, not as tight as we and the rest of the EC would have liked, but it reflects the outcome of multilateral negotiations, in which all sides have to compromise. But it is the Government's view that it represents a significant improvement on the current GATT subsidies code, where those countries are under no such obligations. By signing up to the new code, as drafted, they would be accepting a measure of their responsibilities which should go some way to meeting the oft-voiced concerns of the textiles and clothing industries.

In conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Madam Speaker: Madam Speaker.

Mr. Leigh: I apologise. I see that you have joined us in the Chair, Madam Speaker.

The MFA was only ever intended to be a temporary mechanism. It was meant to facilitate the managed restructuring of the textiles and clothing industries in developed countries by increasingly exposing them to competition from low-cost overseas suppliers; and that is largely what has happened. Professor Silberston's report for my Department in 1989 spells out the progress that has been made in modernising the British textile and clothing industries, with overseas competition being a key spur to improvements in domestic manufacture. I am sure that the House will recognise that the Government's policy has been a success. We have achieved a managed transition to a successful, modern, progressive industry. We will continue to negotiate with our partners to achieve even further progress.

It being Eleven o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Common Agricultural Policy (Reform)

11 am

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I should like to report to the House on the agreement reached yesterday on common agricultural policy reform. This was a major step forward for Europe, for Britain, for British consumers and taxpayers and for British farmers.

The heart of the reform is a reduction in cereals prices of nearly 30 per cent. which will benefit consumers of all products derived from cereals. These include bacon, pork and poultrymeat. Prices of beef will be reduced by 15 per cent. which will keep beef competitive with other meats. All this will be of major advantage to consumers. This change in prices, especially for cereals, should have a beneficial effect on the general agreement on tariffs and trade round. The link between GATT and CAP reform should not be exaggerated, but lowering support prices and lower overall support are what is needed to ensure greater competition in world trade. The European Community has done more than GATT would demand. It is now up to our partners in those negotiations to take the steps that they asked us to take but which so far they have not taken themselves.

The reformed CAP will not now be biased against British farmers in the way originally proposed by the Commission. Larger farms, much more common in the United Kingdom than elsewhere in Europe, would have been crippled by those original proposals. None of the original discriminatory proposals of the Commission has been carried through to the final agreement. This shows yet again that we can best succeed in Europe if we fight hard within the rules.

We argued that our farmers who set aside should receive the same compensation as others. That we achieved. We argued that we should move support from the storage of beef to those who look after animals, particularly in the most difficult areas. That we achieved. We argued that there should be no discrimination against our sheep producers. That we achieved. We argued that those who care for the hills and upland areas should be more directly supported. That we achieved. In all these areas, we have safeguarded the position of the British farmer as the producer of food and the carer of the countryside. In all these areas, we have fundamentally altered the Commission's proposals and confounded those who said that we should give in.

I am especially glad that the agreement makes significant steps towards bringing environmental issues into the heart of the CAP. That was one of Britain's interests. It was Britain which pressed for that and it is Britain which will ensure that we shall build on that during the United Kingdom presidency in the second half of this year.

Finally, the Commission officially confirmed that the costs of the reformed CAP could be met within the agricultural guideline as presently constituted. There is thus no need for the increase in the base that the Commission has been proposing in the context of the Community's future financing.

Yesterday the House gave a Second Reading to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. This outcome also shows Britain at the heart of Europe. I commend the agreement to the House.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I thank the Minister for coming to the House and telling us of his approach to the discussions that have just been concluded. The fact that there were so few details in his statement emphasises the need for a full day's debate, with all the papers being available to Members. I hope that the Minister will press for that after the Whitsun recess.

I know that the Minister is in a state of euphoria and that the press have written this up as a great triumph. I put the euphoria down to a lack of sleep. When we analyse the Minister's proposals in the cold light of day, we find that this deal, too, is wanting.

We believe the reforms to be inadequate, but if they are sufficient to allow a breakthrough in the talks on the general agreement on tariffs and trade, that is important. The reforms will not be seen in any way other than as transitional. They must be seen as the beginning of a long path to reform and not as an end of reform. This reform, like its predecessors, will be doomed to failure because it is built on the defective foundations of the current inefficient farm support system.

At present, the average household of four in the United Kingdom spends £17·50 a week on agricultural support. The reforms announced today increase the taxpayers' subsidy to farmers—an increase of £3 billion, or 12·5 per cent., for the next five years at least. That does not take into account the further £1 billion that is proposed in the Delors plan. Let us get this straight: these proposals increase the cost of agricultural support to the taxpayer. As Britain pays a disproportionate amount of European tax, sadly, the British taxpayer will pay more towards farm subsidies.

The Minister has said that the consumer will benefit. All our evidence shows that the consumer will not benefit. Already the bakers and big bread manufacturers are discounting the possibility of price reductions. They are saying that the reduction in cereal prices cannot be passed on to the consumer because they have already been squeezed too tightly. If the Minister disagrees, perhaps he can tell us by how much he predicts the price of a loaf of bread will fall.

I note that the National Farmers Union has welcomed the proposals. I wonder what is in this deal for the small farmer. I heard what the Minister said about the upland farmer, but there remains the suspicion that the Minister has sold out the small upland farmer in favour of the barley barons of East Anglia.

The core of the reform is compulsory set-aside. That will not work. All the evidence shows that as farmers set aside land they increase production elsewhere. Moreover, the environment will suffer. Perhaps the Minister can give us some advice on whether a farmer may set aside more than 15 per cent. of his land. May a farmer set aside his whole farm, as at present? We find it difficult to accept the notion of paying farmers to do nothing.

Furthermore, the abolition of the co-responsibility levy means that there is no disincentive for farmers not to maximise their production on land that is not set aside. Therefore, surpluses will continue.

The CAP is nonsense. This reform, like its predecessors, is unlikely to work. It must be the first step towards the abolition of the CAP as we know it. Then we can support it. I hope that the Minister will confirm that the reform comes at a high cost to the taxpayer. It will cost British taxpayers at least £3 billion more over the next five years.

Mr. Gummer: I wonder how successful a report one would have to bring to the House before the hon. Gentleman would do one the courtesy of saying one had achieved anything for Britain. He ignored everything that we have achieved. It is amazing that a man who launched his election campaign in south Wales purposely to tell the people what he would do to protect farm incomes should complain about the protection that we are providing. It is clear to me why the people of Wales threw out the very candidates whom the hon. Gentleman sought to support by launching his campaign at that particular time.

The hon. Gentleman asked some specific questions and I am glad he did, because, in doing so, he made it clear that he had little information on which to base them.

Small farmers will certainly benefit considerably, because, instead of spending the money on support through the storage of beef, for example, the money will go directly in premiums to the farmers. Those premiums will be capped to enable those who have had animals in the past to get support continuously. That support will now be greater, and small farmers, especially in the hillsides and difficult parts of the country, will benefit very much.

Of course it is true that the taxpayer will pay a greater proportion, because the consumer will pay a lesser proportion. The only way to avoid that is to denude the countryside of population and render our farmers unable to look after the land—if the hon. Gentleman wants that. He cannot have it both ways, although he has tried to. He tells farmers in farming areas that he will fight for them, but he tells people outside those areas that he will ensure that farmers have no money.

The hon. Gentleman has played this game too often. The truth is that the Opposition do not like agriculture; they do not want it to be supported; and when we come back with a deal for Britain which everyone else in the world acknowledges, the only man who cannot say a word of thanks on behalf of the people of Britain is the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark).

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I regret to have to remind the House that this is a statement and that I am looking for specific questions, not debates.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): If this deal allows the GATT negotiations to proceed, it will be a very good one indeed and I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what he has achieved. How does he estimate the net effect on the prices index of the possible reductions in prices? How much money will be saved on the social security bill? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the result may be increased production? And will he have a careful look at increasing environmentally sensitive areas?

Mr. Gummer: How the figures turn out will depend on what happens over the next three years because that is when the reductions will take place. I hope for about a 2 per cent. reduction in prices below what they would otherwise have been——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): That is the qualifying clause.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but food prices have risen significantly less than the rest of the prices index because of the efficiency of our farmers. Some of those who attack farmers ought to remember that they do so with full stomachs because of what our farmers have done.

As for the environment, it is we who got the Commission to make a statement that it will examine and produce proposals on how to link the requirements on farmers, the subsidies that are paid to them, and their environmental needs. Because of our interest in the environment, we have insisted that farmers work to ensure that the environment is cared for and that we will be able to pay them to allow access to areas that were not previously open. That access was illegal under the old rules and it has been gained at our specific request. I am looking forward to using our presidency to take that work further.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Like all Ministers, the right hon. Gentleman is anxious to be praised; but is he aware that it is difficult to judge this announcement because it is very thin?

Will he answer the fair question asked by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark)? As production costs represent such a small proportion of shop prices, how can he say that this will be of major benefit to consumers? Secondly, will he say more about set-aside? Finally, did the right hon. Gentleman see the statement on television by the Father of the House the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) who said that if someone came down from Mars and saw farmers being paid not to produce in America and Europe and people starving in eastern Europe and many other places, he would think we were all a bit daft?

Mr. Gummer: A loaf of bread bought for 65p means that 8·5p goes to the farmer—so the 29 per cent. that people sometimes talk about does not work through. The figure will work through at about 2 per cent., although it is higher for animals, which are fed largely on grain. If grain is the major part of the basic cost of animal production, a more direct effect can be seen.

A more direct effect will also apply to the price of beef. Lowering prices by 15 per cent. will work through much more directly to shops.

I have always conservatively argued that the commentators have overdone their arguments. The price at the farm gate is only a relatively small proportion of the price at the other end.

The details of set-aside under these arrangements have still to be fixed. We have always maintained that it would be better to continue alternatives. There is now a clear acceptance that we may have non-rotational set-aside—I would much prefer that. We will base it on scientific research on the connection between the cuts in productivity under the two systems. We will then produce proposals.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that production will be cut significantly.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): My right hon. Friend and the Minister of State have again proved themselves doughty fighters for Britain and Britain's farmers. Does my right hon. Friend expect that with reduced surpluses we may be able to phase out intervention buying, particularly of meat products? It seems uniquely silly to buy a first-class article, to store it at colossal expense and then to dump it on the market as a third class article. If we manage to reduce surpluses, will he think along those lines?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right to say that that is a wrong system, which is why we have changed it fundamentally. The beef proposals are now entirely different from those that MacSharry advanced in the first place. They are almost identical with those that we wanted.

The fact that we allowed the process to work in this way shows that Britain can succeed in the European Community once people recognise that we are determined to work with it. Everyone else in Europe knew that we were committed to making Europe work and they supported what we were trying to do. As a result, we got a good deal.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): Does the Minister acknowledge that the drop in cereal prices will have a knock-on effect on other producer areas, and will affect white meat production and help the production of chicken and poultry? That in turn will affect red meat, particularly lamb, which is produced exclusively on grass in the high areas of my constituency and others. Has he thought about how he will help my farmers, who will be squeezed by price changes in other areas?

Mr. Gummer: These proposals safeguard support for the producers of lamb and beef in these difficult areas. That is what we have fought for. The removal of discrimination against them is the most important part of this package. All our calculations show that those who produce in our most difficult areas will benefit most from these decisions. I shall be distributing the figures today as soon as we have them in detailed tabular form and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will see from them that what I am saying is clearly true.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): The whole House should be grateful for the work that my right hon. Friend and his team have carried out. It is a triumph for common sense and sense of purpose. In my worst nightmares I cannot imagine what would have happened had the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) been in my right hon. Friend's place conducting the negotiations.

There is to be a cut in milk quotas. In Dorset and Somerset we have excellent cheese makers who well know that their market is expanding. What certainty is there that other countries will act to cut their quotas? Will there be tougher policing and will it be effective in the countries that we know are cheating all the way down the line?

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that there will be no cut in milk quotas—another of our achievements. *[Interruption.]* There are so many good things in the package that it is impossible to mention them all; and Madam Speaker specifically asked that the statement should be as short as possible.

Madam Speaker: And that the answers might be as short as possible.

Mr. Gummer: Multiple choice questions make for longer answers, Madam Speaker.

My hon. Friend spoke of policing. I was prepared to support the special arrangements for Spain because that country is committed to reducing its production very significantly. I and my colleagues opposed any extra milk for Italy, which refused to cut its overproduction, which has not carried out the quota system and which had the effrontery to suggest that its long period of breaking the rules should be legitimised. Until Italy is prepared to come within the system, and prove that it has done so, I am not prepared to help it.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the Minister realise that he has won wide respect for his continued opposition to the original MacSharry proposals, which were greeted with dismay by the rural communities? I thank him in particular for taking up the issue of the headage on the ewe premium and the suckler cow premium, which are vital to the rural economy. When will he publish all the details of the package, and will it include an analysis of the costs and benefits to all concerned?

Mr. Gummer: I shall produce that information as rapidly as possible. We are working on it now. I thank the hon. Lady for her kind comments. She will be particularly pleased about the effect on the suckler cow herds, which are important for Scotland. I was conscious that we had to win that battle. She will remember that the discrimination against Scotland was particularly strong. My discussions with, and pressure from, the territorial Ministers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland helped a great deal. She will also be pleased to know that, at the same time, we passed the new regulations affecting raspberry growers.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): I add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend on a really magnificent accomplishment and successful result. Will he comment on the elimination of discrimination against arable farmers, who are particularly important to the lifeblood of west Suffolk?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend and neighbour for those comments. We both know how important it was for arable farmers not to have discrimination which would have meant them setting aside 15 per cent. of their arable acreage and receiving no compensation. That was an outrageous proposal. They will now receive full compensation for every acre they set aside.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): In view of the many claims that have been made over the past 30 years of great progress in reforming the CAP, the House would be well advised to wait until it has the fine print of the agreement. From the point of view of the international community—remembering that the overproduction of cereals in western Europe has been claimed to have led to uncompetitive dumping under the heading of export restitution and the wrecking of markets for other cereal producers—can the right hon. Gentleman say that the Community has now agreed to phase out export subsidies from its cereal trade?

Mr. Gummer: The GATT talks will deal with the issue of export restitutions. We are already committed to significant reductions in export restitutions, and the reduction in grain production that will follow the severe set-aside proposals will help that. If Britain were not a full and active member of the EC, these significant reforms would not have come about. Because we are a member and believe in the EC, we are able to make that difference.

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerton and Frome): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the significant proposals, which will be warmly welcomed by the milk producers of Somerset and by cheese producers. How does

[Mr. Mark Robinson]

he think the proposals will help Britain's farmers in their desire to compete on equal terms with their counterparts in the EC?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right to say that we must compete throughout the whole of what is now our home market. The fact that we do not have the special dairy cow subsidy, which would have discriminated against us, the fact that there is not a cut in milk quota for a country which is not self-sufficient in milk production and the fact that our milk farmers will now have the benefit of reform of the Milk Marketing Board—all of which would have been denied them had Labour won power at the last election—mean that we shall be able to compete more effectively in the European market.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Do not the proposals depend on the projected price of grain and on Mr. MacSharry's assumption that, by spending more public money in the short term, we shall have to spend less public money and give less support in the longer term? Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that that mathematical assumption may not work out, because if it costs a bit more to produce rather less than he hopes, the mathematical gearing will be lower? What about the world price of grain? What assumption has he made about that on which to base his projections? Agricultural support should be based on the needs of farmers and their families and on good husbandry rather than on projections of what may happen to markets in the future.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. We have said that this represents a 29 per cent. reduction in the price. It could, in certain circumstances, be significantly more, because the changes open the markets to the effects of world prices much more effectively, which is why we sought it.

I urge the hon. Gentleman to wait until he has seen all the details. We did not agree all of this until the middle of last evening, which is why he does not have the full details in the tabular form in which I shall produce them, and I shall do so as openly as possible. I hope that he will then clearly see that this is a significant change and that, above all, it is a change to achieve what he wants. It significantly moves the way in which we support agriculture, from the consumer price—thereby achieving an increase at the production end—towards direct payment to farmers so that they may continue to produce food and look after the land.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on securing the removal of the discriminatory proposals from the original package. That will be widely welcomed in the farming community. Will he comment on farm incomes? Is he aware that farmers in my constituency and elsewhere tell me that, in real terms, farm incomes are at their lowest for 50 years? Can he confirm what Mr. MacSharry is believed to have said yesterday in a statement—that farmers will be fully compensated for the price reductions arranged in yesterday's deal?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. The difficulty with general statements is that they are about average farm prices and incomes, whereas I am concerned with individual farm incomes. I believe that as a result of this change there will have to be some significant changes in the way in which farmers deal with the market, because they will be closer to it. I am convinced that the result will be to give farmers a greater degree of security, that, in particular, farmers in the most difficult areas will benefit, and that they will get the kind of stability that they have most sought. But the truth remains that, in the end, the more we open agriculture to the market, the more important it is for farmers to take advantage of the market. I believe that our farmers can do it, so that Mr. MacSharry's comments apply particularly to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): The Minister has referred repeatedly in general terms to the good deal that has been obtained for the people operating in the most difficult areas. Will he focus on certain aspects? For example, many hill farmers and crofters are operating at the very margins of agriculture. They want to know whether it will be possible for them to continue to earn a living and whether, in particular, it will be worth their while to continue managing sheep. Will the Minister break away from the generality of the matter and give a few specifics which might offer encouragement so that those to whom I have referred may share some of his enthusiasm?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman will find that next year's suckler cow premium will be very significantly increased. He will find that the premiums that are paid directly to farmers—in replacement, therefore, of the old system of intervention, which was a daily business rather than a safety net—will increase direct payments to farmers very significantly indeed. I shall provide the hon. Gentleman with figures that he can then apply much more effectively to individual farmers. I come back to my belief that one of the troubles in these discussions is that people trumpet generalities of figures when the individual farmer wants to see how they will affect him. That is why we are producing these figures in a form that the hon. Gentleman will be able to apply individually.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what seems to be a significant contribution to the GATT round, upon which our prosperity and future rest. Can he say what the cost of it will be to the Community budget?

Mr. Gummer: The total costs will be within the guidelines, as negotiated. That means that there will be no need for the £1·5 billion addition for which Mr. Delors asked. It was wrong of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), to suggest that that is brought into the matter. It will not be needed. Although the GATT round is very important, so is Europe; so is our success in Europe; so is our success in making Europe the foundation of our ability to complete in the world. Just as important as the contribution made to the GATT round is the fact that this agreement again means that Britain, at the heart and centre of Europe, can make a huge difference—not only for ourselves and for the whole of Europe but for the way in which Europe deals with the rest of the world. If we want to change the terms of trade, we can do it just as importantly within Europe, the largest trading business in the world, as we do within GATT.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the price of lamb produced in upland areas rise, stay the same or fall over the next five years?

Mr. Gummer: If I were able to answer that question, I should know a great deal more about markets than anybody has managed to know so far and I should be very rich indeed, so long as I resigned my job; I should be unable to carry out that arrangement if I were still Minister of Agriculture. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that, when we are trying to move further towards the market, no answer to that question would be either truthful or sensible.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the House that there are questions to the Minister on 4 June which are relevant to this subject.

Because of the statement, the next two debates will be for only half an hour each so that we may return to our timing arrangements.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that you have difficult decisions to make when important statements are made, but, in fairness, I should make it clear that my party now represents the vast majority of farmers in Wales and I would have welcomed an opportunity to make a contribution on a very important statement.

Madam Speaker: I had seen the hon. Gentleman. I know that he has been in the House throughout the statement. I regret not having been able to call him, but he is right. I have judgments to make on these matters.

Small Firms

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

11.32 am

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): The House will be aware that pressure has been applied for some time about taking action on the late payment of bills which, regrettably, has become a feature of our commercial life in recent times. I accept at once that the Government have plans to encourage the prompt payment of bills, in particular by Government Departments. They are to be congratulated on that initiative. I do not think, however, that the proposals that require large companies to state in their annual report and accounts how quickly they pay their bills or the proposal that prime contractors or Government Departments must include a clause in their sub-contracts committing themselves to pay sub-contractors promptly within 30 days go far enough.

Let us suppose that a prime Government contractor pays its suppliers within 30 days for Government business. What is to prevent that same firm, to compensate for that, delaying the payments to other suppliers for non-Government business? Why should it be only firms tied to Government contracts who pay their suppliers on time? The principle of taking action on late payment has been accepted by the Government for all their own contracts and I think that the commercial world would like to see similar action taken on late payment of bills for other contracts. The Government cannot seriously imagine that the prompt payment of Government contracts will in itself be sufficient to change what is now regular commercial practice—the withholding of payment long after the due date. Hon. Members are aware, from their many constituency and surgery cases, of the way in which large companies deliberately manage their affairs and cash flow in order to retain their money for as long as they can and to leave payment as late as they possibly can.

In the case of large Government contracts, sub-contractors may have to declare that they will pay their bills within 30 days, but what is to happen, I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who I am so glad to see is to answer the debate, to the sub-contractors of the sub-contractors? They will know that the original sub-contractors for Government business will be tied to 30 days. Armed with that information they will then be able to borrow from their banks and delay payment themselves, which is a very convenient way of making money. That cannot be intended. It is a very bankable proposition. The bank knows that payment will be made by the main sub-contractor within 30 days, because that is a condition of getting Government business. Therefore I have no doubt that the sub-contractors to the Government sub-contractors will make full use of that bankable proposition. Unless my hon. Friend can advise me otherwise, there is no reason why all the stages downwards, through the sub-contractors for major Government business, should not also be tied to the 30-day rule. When he replies to the debate, I am sure that my hon. Friend will be able to give me the benefit of the expert advice that is available to him.

I am not the first hon. Member to raise the question of late payments in the House. Most recently, my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) introduced a

[Sir Peter Hordern]

10-minute Bill, just before the election. Before that, my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) introduced a Bill making late payment a statutory offence, but his Bill, alas, was talked out.

I ask my hon. Friend to understand and sympathise with the position of small businesses today. I am sure that all hon. Members have had representations made to them by small businesses. During the boom, many of them borrowed on the security of their homes. I suppose that one could argue that they were ill-advised to do so and that they should have known better. But what business man would turn away business on the ground that he did not like the general outlook for business? What support does he have now from the banks? That is a new factor. One reason for raising this subject today is the extraordinary pressure that has been exerted on small businesses by the banks. As my hon. Friend knows, the banks are in a very severe mess, first because of their large loans to Latin American countries and secondly because of the huge loans to the property sector, lent on property values that have turned out to be grossly exaggerated. Now that they have lost all that money, or cannot claim it back for many years, they are turning to small businesses to get what they can out of them. They are calling in loans and applying pressure upon small businesses. That is a serious matter for all small firms and it is not surprising that they are in such difficulty. When one adds the unscrupulous practices of some companies deliberately delaying payment for goods and services as a matter of commercial practice the situation is very serious indeed. All the large companies are well regulated. Their payment systems are heavily computerised and notices of regret are sent out to small companies saying that an administrative hitch has occurred and payment cannot be made. That is a regular commercial practice and it is a disgrace. We know that it is going on and it is time that the Government took action to stop it.

Last February, the Right to Interest Group produced a table backed by the Forum for Private Business, Inter Justitia and Dun and Bradstreet. It showed that it takes 81 days from the date of invoice for the average business debt to be paid in England and Wales. That is 51 days after the average 30-day terms of payment and gives England and Wales the worst record in western Europe. The group complained that it would not be acceptable for German purchasers, who pay their business debts 18 days after settlement date, to wait 30 days longer for settlement of their English accounts.

I hope that I do not offend my hon. Friend's sensibilities, because I have never thought of him as a Euro-fanatic and I hope that he will forgive my saying that this is one matter where the Community is right and we are wrong. Interest rates are lower than a year ago, but they are high in real terms and will remain so for some time. Enormous sums are owed to banks, which have been instructed to press small business hard for payment. Many businesses are deliberately delaying payment as a matter of commercial practice. The Government seem to think that the problem can be met by them paying their bills on time, which they should anyway, and requiring sub-contractors to do so as well.

That response is quite inadequate. Nothing less than a change in the law will do. My hon. Friend the Minister knows that the Law Commission studied this matter in 1978, before the problems were anything like as acute as they are today, and drew up a draft Bill as an appendix to the report. Lord Stanley of Alderley moved an amendment to the Administration of Justice Act 1982 designed to ensure that the Law Commission's recommendations were implemented in full. My right hon. and noble Friend Lord Hailsham—it is easy to see where his sympathies lay—opposed the amendment on the ground that it was controversial. Some bodies, such as the CBI, opposed the proposals, but the CBI would naturally do so. The Government have no duty to the CBI, which represents large and medium-sized firms which it suits to delay payment. That is how they make a lot of money. The Government have an absolute duty to ensure that the wilful delay in paying bills is ended. That will be achieved only by legislation. All other Community countries, except for Greece, Portugal and Ireland have such legislation. I understand that similar conditions apply in many American states.

What is wanted is the attachment of interest on late payment. Nobody in the House today would dream of paying their Inland Revenue bills late because of the consequences of doing so—interest is applied at once. Interest is applied at once if payment is late on our Barclaycard or Access bills. It is a simple matter to put right.

Late payment is a serious problem and small businesses, which face severe difficulty, need to be helped. I fear that the Government have not acted with sufficient force to correct this injustice, which will not go away. The Government must be seen to act, just as Governments throughout the Community and other parts of the world have already acted to ensure that the prompt payment of bills is an accepted standard. This abuse must be put right and I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to do what he always does—to excel himself when he has the opportunity and to make a firm statement about the Government's intentions.

11.44 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): With the leave of the House, may I welcome you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to your new post? I am very pleased to see you in the Chair.

I am not sure that I can excel myself, but I appreciate what my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) said about the importance of the problem. No one denies that late payment is a problem for business, especially small businesses. Outstanding debt has a severe effect on their cash flows and threatens their survival.

The House is indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham for initiating this debate. He rightly mentioned the difficulties that have been faced by small businesses in the recent recession and, to use his own words, I can understand and sympathise with the conditions under which they are labouring. I was going to deal with my hon. Friend's calls for legislation at the end of my speech, but as this is a timed debate I shall deal with them straight away and then return to what the Government are doing in seeking to set an example.

Many surveys confirm that businesses are worried about current payment practices. According to a study carried out for the European Commission in 1989 by Price Waterhouse, payment terms are regarded as a problem for

businesses in all member states except Denmark and Germany. In the United Kingdom, a survey by the Confederation of British Industry at the end of 1990 revealed that late payment was seen as a serious problem by most small firms. One in five small firms even thought its survival to be threatened by late payment. The CBI noted a marked deterioration in comparison with the previous survey four years earlier, in which only one small firm in 10 felt at risk. Delays of between 15 and 45 days beyond the terms agreed in the contract were common. One in five firms was accustomed to waiting more than 75 days to receive payment. My hon. Friend is right to highlight the severe problems that business is facing.

There have been calls from some quarters for the introduction of legislation, which my hon. Friend repeated, to tackle late payment through a statutory right to interest on overdue debts. We are keeping the issue under constant review, although it must be said—this is the difficulty under which we labour—that to date most organisations representing small firms remain sceptical that legislation will improve the late payment problem. The federation of small businesses, the CBI smaller firms council and the Institute of Credit Management have remained firmly opposed to legislation. Indeed, some argue that it could damage the small firm sector. They fear that legislation might encourage large firms with buying power to impose longer payment terms and that it would be used only against small firms.

I know a bit about the subject, because I well remember our hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire, (Mr. Mates) introducing the Interest on Debts Bill in 1990. I took part in the debate when we devoted an entire morning in the House to the problem. We faced a problem then similar to that which we face now. There was a complete division of opinion among organisations representing small firms on the best way forward. Some point out that suppliers that are owed money would still have to take the customer through the court system, which they are reluctant to do for fear of losing future orders. Suppliers can stipulate credit periods and interest penalties as part of their contract terms under existing laws, although I accept that a small company looking for business is unlikely to want to impose difficult terms on an important customer.

We remain strongly committed to ensuring that the Government lead by example on prompt payment. Baroness Denton, the new Minister for Small Firms, is prepared to follow up personally any cases of alleged late payment to small firms by Government Departments. In addition, she is considering what other measures may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by other public sector organisations.

Let me say a little about what the Government feel that they can do. I am sorry that I cannot offer any obvious solutions to my hon. Friend other than to say that we recognise that there is a severe problem. There is also a division of opinion among those representing small businesses and we must keep that under constant review. For those reasons, the previous Minister for Small Firms asked all major Government purchasing Departments and their executive agencies to undertake surveys of their payment record during the financial year 1991-92. Departments were asked to provide information on the percentage of invoices paid within the agreed terms or, when none had been agreed, within 30 days. They were also asked to ensure that they had in place systems that enabled them to continue to monitor their payment performance.

The results of the survey will be published shortly. The early indications are encouraging and suggest that the majority of Departments will report that they paid 80 per cent. or more of their sampled invoices on time. If so, that result will be in line with that of a survey undertaken by Graham Bannock and Partners in September 1991 into the attitudes among small firms of selling to Government. Seventy five per cent. of the small firms surveyed said that they had not experienced any delays in payment from Government Departments.

It is interesting to compare that result with experiences in the private sector in Germany where payment practices are generally considered to be exemplary. In 1991, agreed terms were observed by 73 per cent. of German firms. Therefore, the United Kingdom Government record would appear to compare very favourably with that of the Germans.

Government Departments and their executive agencies are well aware of the need for prompt payment to suppliers and contractors. Treasury guidelines to Departments state:

"The timing of payment should normally be stipulated in Government contracts. Where there is no contractual provision or other understanding, departments should pay within 30 days or on receipt of goods or services or the presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment, whichever is the later".

Measures to strengthen the guidelines further were announced in the 1992 Budget. To help encourage prompt payment of bills by Government contractors to their sub-contractors, all Government contracts are to contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay its sub-contractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the sub-contractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

I made a careful note of what my hon. Friend said about sub-contractors and sub-contractors of sub-contractors. It is very difficult for the Government to go right back down the supply chain because, after all, we are talking about freedom of contracts for contractors. Sub-contractors can and should have payment terms in their contracts and enforce them in their credit management and, if necessary, in the courts. That is the most that I can say about the problem, which I recognise. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising it and, perhaps now that he has done so on the Floor of the House, we shall be able to consider it again.

Departments are also introducing their own initiatives to ensure prompt payment. The Department of Transport and its agencies, for example, have set up a number of telephone hotlines to help suppliers and their contractors with payment issues. Although that is very encouraging, it is not perfect. I recognise that and my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to it. I am aware that there are a number of problems, especially in the construction industry but time does not allow me to deal with that.

Where late payment to small firms occurs, the fault is by no means always with the Government Department. Many delays are the result of inaccurate or poor invoicing by small suppliers. One component of Government

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

measures to encourage prompt payment has been to provide guidance to small firms on how to invoice properly and introduce effective credit management systems.

The Government also have a responsibility to ensure that good services that they purchase are to an acceptable standard and that proper use is made of public funds. Payment delays will inevitably and quite correctly result where there are disputes over quality.

I shall now mention action to improve payment practices in the private sector, an issue which I know especially concerns my hon. Friend, although I am sure that he does not think it wrong for the Government to do what they are doing in trying to set a good example. Of course we want prompt payment to become normal practice, not only in the public but in the private sector. The Government have introduced a number of measures to encourage that.

In October 1991, we published "Making the cash flow", a guide to prompt payment for suppliers and customers, large and small. More than 75,000 copies have since been distributed to firms of all sizes and their advisers, and the guide has been very well received. It is aimed not only at customers to persuade them of the benefits of paying suppliers promptly but at suppliers to encourage better credit management. A recent survey for Barclays bank revealed that 46 per cent. of small companies surveyed were doing nothing to address their outstanding debts. In addition to changes to Government contracting guidelines, the 1992 Budget also included announcements of other measures to tackle late payment.

New company reporting regulations for large companies are to be introduced, which will require disclosure of payment performance. Suppliers would then be able to avoid more easily doing business with those firms where payment is or could be a problem. In addition, potential customers will be aware of which businesses are not treating their suppliers professionally and which, therefore, might also treat customers badly.

There will be improvements to small claims court procedures, making it easier for those chasing debts through the courts. A range of court reforms have already been introduced which are beginning to benefit those chasing bad debts. Summons requests can now be processed within 24 to 48 hours through the summons production centre established in January 1990. Plaintiffs can issue most summonses in the courts of their choice, irrespective of where the defendant lives or carries on business. Certain functions such as applications to vary orders and for attachment of earnings orders have been devolved to court staff to fix rates of payment.

Procedures for dealing with business debtors have been standardised. Guidelines for court staff explain that if a business cannot pay its debtors, it should normally be wound up or made bankrupt unless a voluntary agreement, which is acceptable to the plaintiff, can be reached. As a general rule, judgments and orders should therefore ensure that business debtors are paid within three months. I am sure that my hon. Friend will regard that as a step forward.

Development funding is being made available to trade associations in sectors where late payment is a significant problem to support new prompt payment initiatives. These could include telephone helplines, counselling services, seminars on effective credit management and the development of common, sector-wide contract arrangements. We also welcome initiatives by others to encourage prompt payment. I was pleased to hear, for example, that nearly 400 companies have already publicly signed up to the CBI prompt payment code.

My hon. Friend mentioned European initiatives. The European Commission is about to publish proposals for EC-wide action on late payment. These are likely to address payment by the public sector and cross-border trading. We shall be consulting widely on the proposals and my officials will be keeping in close touch with their Commission colleagues to keep them abreast of the reactions to the proposals of small firms and their representative bodies.

Unfortunately from my hon. Friend's point of view, I cannot promise instant legislation because there appears to a difference of opinion in the business sector, but I hope that he will think that the Government are setting a good example and ensuring prompt payment of their contractors and, where possible, of their sub-contractors. we are also ensuring that we are not only setting an example by encouraging business to establish codes of practice to deal with this serious problem. The House will welcome what my hon. Friend has said and I hope that he is satisfied with what I have said in reply.

Toxic Waste (Ellesmere Port and Neston)

11.58 am

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I am sure that it goes without saying that the importance of the chemical and allied sector in my constituency cannot be emphasised sufficiently, but it is an industry which, by its very nature, creates a fair amount of waste, some of which is dangerous.

Only last week, Sir David Attenborough spoke in glowing terms of the changing attitudes of the industry in the past 40 years. He was speaking at the Chemical Industries Association Ltd's awards ceremony for young achievers. I am pleased to say that Michelle Aspinall who is a constituent of the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) and works in a factory in my constituency, was the recipient of an award. The hon. Member for Chester and I both praised her for her achievement.

In his address Sir David stressed that one of the great changes that had taken place in the industry was the growing enthusiasm of young people in the industry for environmental issues. There is insufficient information in this country about many areas of environmental concern, but there have been a fair number of interesting epidemiological studies on environmental issues involving the handling of substances that we all now know to be dangerous. However, there is little real evidence on the issue that I am raising today.

Naturally, the fact that the evidence is not available causes fears in my constituency. There is a certain amount of anecdotal evidence about leukaemia clusters and the like—and it stems from the fact that in the United Kingdom there are no reliable statistics on waste produced or disposed of in the United Kingdom. That judgment comes from volume II of the second report of the Select Committee on the Environment 1988-89—"Toxic Waste". I believe that the situation has changed very little since then.

I want to raise the issue of organo-halogens, especially polychlorinated biphenyls. The Minister will know that those substances are known to be carcinogenic, which gives rise to serious concern in this country and throughout the world. Such compounds are extremely toxic and persistent and they are biocumulative—that is, they stay with us throughout the food chain. It is important that positive action be taken to control the handling of such materials, especially their disposal. It is vital that they be disposed of in circumstances that are scientifically proven to be safe and which are acceptable to society as a whole.

For some time, throughout the United Kingdom, there have been rumours and counter-rumours about the disposal of PCBs from Western Australia. It always seems odd to me that the people of an enormous land area such as Western Australia are concerned about PCBs being incinerated in their communities, yet in this country, which covers a much smaller geographical area, PCBs are often incinerated—both in my constituency of Ellesmere Port and Neston and elsewhere. There have been debates in the House in the past about a similar facility in Pontypool.

The concern about the waste from Western Australia was brought to my attention by a Labour party member from one of the Knowsley constituencies who visited Australia in December 1990 and brought back a press cutting from the Perth *Sunday Times*, under the headline:

"UK ideal for WA waste".

I hope that the whole House would denounce that statement. The United Kingdom is not ideal for anybody's waste.

That press cutting contained some authoritative statements by senior officers of the Western Australian Administration, to the effect that large volumes of intractable waste needs to be disposed of, and that Cleanaway—an Australian public company with a United Kingdom operation—had a high-temperature incinerator at Ellesmere Port, near Liverpool. On receipt of the cutting I had a series of exchanges with the directors of Cleanaway, the company involved. As the House knows, 50 per cent. of that company is owned by GKN and the other 50 per cent. by Brambles, the parent company of Cleanaway Australia. Brambles Australia sent a facsimile to Cleanaway, which was subsequently passed on to me by the technical director. In effect, it says that the cutting came from a minor newspaper and was not quite correct. It said:

"This article was one of many hundreds that came out in the press following the announcement in November of the government's decision not to proceed with a high-temperature incinerator at Corowa . . . In summary, the article appeared in what appears to be a small regional newspaper following the decision on the Corowa site."

That statement gave a certain amount of comfort to people in my constituency and it was followed by a letter from the company, again making it clear that the Perth *Sunday Times* article was not known to the technical director. The letter said that the importation of PCBs into the United Kingdom was

"purely a matter of conjecture on the part of the journalist who wrote the article."

At about the same time, the shipping company Carpenteria International stated its intention to ship to the United Kingdom material for destruction at the ReChem plant at Pontypool, and also at Fawley.

I have discussed the matter with my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), who regrets that he cannot be here for this debate on a subject dear to his heart. Unfortunately, he has had to attend a funeral today —I am sure that the House would wish to send our sympathy to him. He has told me that the situation in Pontypool causes concern equal to that expressed by people in my constituency. My hon. Friend and I are both determined to continue to campaign on the subject until positive results are forthcoming.

Despite the assurances that have been received, it is clear that plans are afoot to import into the United Kingdom toxic materials for incineration. During the general election campaign I was asked by the local media to comment on the latest news about shipments authorised by the Western Australia Government to leave Fremantle en route to the United Kingdom. I was pleased to be able to respond by giving an unequivocal assurance on behalf of my party, following discussions with my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), the shadow Minister for environmental protection. She said in a press statement that Labour's manifesto promised that trade in toxic waste would be banned. That was not a spur-of-the-moment decision; it was firmly contained in our manifesto.

[Mr. Andrew Miller]

The current position is explained in a letter from Cleanaway which—coincidentally I am sure—I received this morning. A copy letter to local councillors was enclosed, setting out the details about Australian imports. It is clear that the imports will not necessarily be in large tonnages, but in dribs and drabs. The company clearly intends to import material half way round the world for incineration in the United Kingdom, close to a residential area. From my comments about Carpentaria's involvement in shipments to ReChem, it is clear that similar projects are under way which will affect the Pontypool area.

The position is changing rapidly throughout the world. In the United States, the Senate is now dealing in committee with the Hazardous and Additional Waste Imports Act 1991. In recent years, 89 less-industrialised nations have banned waste imports and many have called on the United States to stop exporting waste. The European Parliament has approved a ban on waste exports to developing countries and the EC has already banned all waste exports to former colonies in Africa, in the Caribbean and in the Pacific area.

There have been many scandals over the years concerning the trade in waste. In the run-up to the Rio summit, let us now take a positive step and protect our people by boldly saying to the world that this trade must stop. I call on the Government, in the interests of the health of my constituents and in the interests of their peace of mind, to block any proposals now, or in the future, to import any toxic material into the United Kingdom for incineration or for any other method of disposal.

12.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) has raised issues of understandable concern to his constituents and I welcome the opportunity to respond.

I fully understand and share public concern about the general question of imports of waste for disposal. There is no question whatever of the United Kingdom being a "dustbin" for the world's waste; there never has been and there never will be.

Waste comes here because we are equipped to deal with it efficiently, effectively and in an environmentally sound way. Some other countries, on the other hand, have been slower than us to develop their own facilities.

Notwithstanding our own abilities, we firmly believe that the international movement of waste for disposal should be minimised. In particular, we believe that all developed countries should become self-sufficient in the final disposal of waste and dispose of their own waste arisings. That position is reflected in international legislation, including an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development decision-recommendation of 1988 and the United Nations Basel convention on the transboundary movement of hazardous waste and its disposal.

The disposal of waste throughout the world raises questions that can be dealt with effectively only by international action—by world action. The United Kingdom is opposed in principle to the continuing import of hazardous wastes from developed countries. In principle, imports of such waste should continue only in respect of developing countries—countries which may, for the foreseeable future, be unable to deal with such waste in a manner that is not detrimental either to the planet or to themselves. We must keep matters in their proper perspective. Only about 5 per cent. of hazardous waste dealt with in Great Britain comes from abroad.

The Basel convention, which came into force on 5 May, is a significant global advance in waste management and we fully support it. The United Kingdom signed the convention in 1989 and has pushed for the earliest possible implementation of its provisions within the European Community so that we can ratify it as quickly as possible.

Basel has introduced a global system of controls on the international movement of hazardous waste. Parties to the convention must ensure the availability of adequate disposal facilities within their borders as far as possible and minimise transfrontier movements, ensure that importing countries are informed and give their consent before any shipments, minimise their production of hazardous wastes and provide for the environmentally sound management of wastes for which the parties are to agree guidelines.

At present the controls we have in the United Kingdom over the international movement of waste are those in the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988, which derive from European Community directives. They cover only hazardous waste and they prevent shipments only where these would lead to a breach of environmental or related controls—for example, if waste were going to a facility not authorised to handle that type of waste. Basel is a development of and a move forward on those principles.

To implement the convention and to deal with other concerns about waste movements of all kinds, the EC has proposed a new regulation which will apply to all shipments into and out of the Community, with the exception of some non-hazardous wastes moving for recovery. We hope that the latest draft of the regulation will be agreed by the Council of Ministers very soon, even possibly next week, following several years of difficult and complex negotiations. We can then proceed as quickly as we can to ratify the Basel convention, in company with the rest of the European Community.

The feature of the current draft of most relevance today is that it will severely curtail the import of waste for disposal from outside the Community and EFTA, from countries such as Australia. Such shipments would be allowed only under a bilateral agreement with the country of export. Those agreements would be possible only where the exporting country does not have, and cannot acquire, the necessary suitable disposal facilities of its own. The aim is to restrict imports of waste to those from developing countries, and not from developed countries.

I understand that the Australian Government have granted an export licence to one or more companies in Australia for hazardous waste, including PCBs, from Western Australia. A contract with an authorised disposal facility is a prerequisite to that licence and Cleanaway has such a contract with one Australian company. But those companies would then compete for a contract to carry out the export. Precisely where the waste went for disposal would depend on which company won. This might be the United Kingdom which has three possible facilities

equipped to receive PCB waste, including the high-temperature incinerator at Ellesmere Port, but it could be elsewhere, including France.

The United Kingdom has outstanding transfrontier shipment notification documents submitted from Australia under the Transfrontier Shipment of Waste Regulations 1988. However, there are no indications about whether they will be used to cover any of this particular consignment of PCB wastes, or where it might actually be sent—if it is sent at all. The Australian Government have ratified the Basel convention and will know that the convention requires parties not to send waste to non-parties, which currently include the United Kingdom. We are looking to the European Community regulation to encourage developed countries, especially those outside the Community and EFTA, to become self-sufficient in waste disposal, in line with our policy in this matter.

The United Kingdom is virtually self-sufficient in disposing of its waste. Records for hazardous waste exports show only 500 tonnes exported for disposal in 1990-91 and that traffic is to cease, thanks to the co-operation of the United Kingdom company involved. The majority of wastes that we dispose of in Britain are produced here. As I have said, only about 5 per cent. come from elsewhere. Our procedure for disposal licensing and pre-notification of the movement of special waste were forerunners in European legislation and in 1988 we were one of the earliest nations to implement transfrontier notification procedures for hazardous wastes under an EC directive.

Incineration is an important waste disposal option. High-temperature incineration employing state-of-the-art combustion and emission control systems provides an essential long-term secure disposal option for a broad spectrum of organic wastes, including PCBs. Of course, it is quite rightly a sensitive issue, but the public may be reassured that the tight environmental regulations that are applied to incineration—and, indeed, to all waste disposal methods—ensure that there are no dangers from the incineration process. Modern high-temperature incinerators are safe and do not produce highly toxic emissions as some have claimed.

Although alternative options are increasingly being investigated, and some are being developed commercially, they provide at present only a partial alternative to high-temperature incineration for a limited range of specific wastes.

Mr. Miller: I was concerned about the Minister's comments regarding the safety of modern incinerators. Can he tell the House the evidence on the basis of which that statement was made? The waste coming out of incinerator chimneys is a matter of great concern to my constituents, as is the chemical make-up and disposal of the ash.

Mr. Baldry: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, in his constituency and elsewhere, incinerators are monitored, scrutinised, regulated and reviewed toughly and tightly by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. If the hon. Gentleman has concerns about the effectiveness of the regulatory controls, he may wish to discuss them in detail with HMIP. I am sure that the inspectorate will be only too happy to go through with him the controls, standards and tests that it uses to ensure the highest environmental standards for incinerators in Britain and to ensure that they cause no danger to the hon. Gentleman's constituents or to the environment as a whole.

The alternative of storing waste that would otherwise be disposed of by such means presents its own problems of safe containment, to say nothing of the difficulties of choosing and agreeing a suitable location for storage. Even in the wide ranges of Australia, those issues do not go away. So the environmental impacts of using incineration need to be compared with the environmental consequences of using alternative disposal methods, such as landfill. Modern incineration can offer a good disposal route for these wastes in which the various release routes by which pollutants can reach the environment are tightly controlled.

As I said, the Ellesmere Port incinerator is registered by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. Before a certificate of registration is granted Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution must be satisfied that the operator is using the best practicable means of preventing harmful emissions and rendering harmless any that cannot be prevented. Later this year, the plant will be subject to the new controls included in part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Under those provisions Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will apply integrated pollution control, which addresses releases to all three media. This entails looking at the best practicable environmental option for dealing with potential pollution from the process and requires the application of the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost—BATNEEC—to prevent or minimise the emission of prescribed substances and to render harmless other emissions.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's concerns, but the plant at Ellesmere Port has already demonstrated its ability to meet the new standards. It is fitted with comprehensive monitoring equipment for the measurement of releases and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution regularly conducts independent confirmatory exercises. We should not underestimate the effectiveness of our monitoring and controlling procedures or the standards of our waste disposal industry.

In addition, the European Commission has recently sent to the Council of Ministers for consideration a draft directive on hazadous waste incineration, which will introduce strict combustion conditions and emission limits across the Community. We welcome the move towards common tight standards in the interests of protecting public health and the environment and we shall be looking closely at the details.

PCBs are chlorinated organic compounds, which, because of their stability and good die-electric qualities, have been widely used around the world in electrical equipment such as transformers and capacitors. They have subsequently been found to accumulate in the tissue of plants and animals and are probably carcinogens. Countries around the world are phasing out existing uses, and the United Kingdom is committed to doing so by 1995, and by 1999 at the latest.

Disposal is by means of high-temperature incineration under careful conditions. Such incinerators are relatively few and far between, even in the developed world at present. The risks from PCB wastes should be properly understood. They are not instantly poisonous or highly flammable. The risks lie in their persistence and accumulation in the environment and also in the

[Mr. Baldry]

possibility of dioxin emissions if PCBs are incinerated under less rigorous standards than those used by our own waste management industry and its regulators.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom has extensive controls to protect the environment. We would rather not import waste from other developed countries outside the Community and EFTA, such as Australia. The Government are looking to the new EC waste movements regulations to limit such movements. Existing controls do not allow local authorities or the Government to prevent such imports if all the controls on movement and disposal are being complied with. But the Basel convention prevents Australia from sending its waste here at present, while the United Kingdom has not yet ratified the convention. That should encourage the Australian companies involved to look for other solutions.

Britain has played a leading role in persuading the international community that all developed countries should become self-sufficient in waste disposal. We are strong advocates of the importance of self-sufficiency and are determined that there should be effective global controls on hazardous waste movements.

UNESCO

12.28 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I was privileged to have an Adjournment debate about UNESCO on 25 July last year in the previous Parliament. With your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to play this Adjournment debate in a slightly different way. If the House wishes to know my views in greater detail, I happily refer hon. Members to the appropriate columns of *Hansard* for 25 July 1991. I hope that this debate will be allowed to show the considerable support in all parts of the House for Britain's early return to that important international organisation.

The background is familiar to us all. In 1985, Britain decided to withdraw from UNESCO. I felt at the time, and have felt since, that that was a fundamental error. I am proud of the part that the United Kingdom played in helping to set up that organisation. I told the House last July that Britain had a

"dominant influence in establishing UNESCO at a preparatory conference held at the Institute of Civil Engineers in London . . . Its secretariat was initially based in London. Its first director general was British and its constitution was deposited in London. Its accounts were audited by the United Kingdom Comptroller and Auditor General."—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 1299.]

I have no doubt that Britain was treated favourably as a founder member of that organisation.

We came out against the advice of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), who was a member of that Select Committee, will catch your eye in due course, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We came out against the wishes of the officers of the Conservative foreign affairs committee and against the advice of those who took part in the debate with the exception of one hon. Member.

I hate the word "universality": it is crude and cumbersome. However, it puts over an important concept. United Nations organisations are not for picking and choosing to suit the needs of any particular country at any particular time. There is no menu from which one picks one's choice courses.

I am pleased to see my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the Chamber on a Friday. My first basic point for him is that it is very much in the United Kingdom's interests speedily to return to UNESCO because all hon. Members present support Britain having a seat on the United Nations Security Council. We have played our part in that Council in recent years with great proficiency. In particular, I recall the special UN Security Council meeting that we initiated to discuss UN affairs. However, many countries feel that the time has come for Britain to give up its seat on the Security Council. Japan, Germany and the European Community are mentioned instead. Those countries and their diplomats argue that Britain has started to opt out of UN organisations, in particular UNESCO.

If we are successfully to defend our position on the Security Council, it would be prudent to return to UNESCO without delay. If we consult the education, scientific and cultural establishment in this country, it is clear that there is massive support for our rejoining

UNESCO. Indeed, it is difficult to find a major organisation in that category that believes that we are wise to be playing it as we are.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State and I have used one argument in the context of the European Community: it is no use standing on the sidelines and shouting. We may not like everything that goes on in the Community, but we must get off the sidelines and on to the pitch and play our part. It is bizarre that in the context of UNESCO, we argue that we can better influence events by shouting to our supporters who have remained on the pitch. When we came out of UNESCO, the Commonwealth high commissioners made representations to the British Government. They said that they were being let down, as did our European Community partners. We have allowed the French, who are no slouches in this regard, to gain influence in UNESCO and to help spread the influence of the French language. Many Commonwealth countries, particularly in Africa, wonder what we are doing.

That is all I wish to say in introducing the debate. I believe that there is ovewhelming support in the House for recognising that a mistake has been made and for returning to UNESCO. That would benefit the United Kingdom and that important international organisation.

12.34 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I support what the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) said and congratulated him on the succinct way in which he moved the debate and his courageous and principled persistence over the years in raising this topic.

Perhaps we both have a nonconformist background, but I, too, have three points to make. The first is simply that the Opposition accepted the view in 1984 and 1985 that much was wrong with UNESCO, but, in our judgment, it was wholly wrong to leave. The proper course would have been to remain inside the organisation and fight our corner with other like-minded countries.

We agreed with several of the Government's criticisms of UNESCO's policy and organisation. They criticised the degree of bureaucracy for its own sake, the amount of croneyism associated with the name of the then director-general, the policies in vogue at the time, the new international order in terms of the press, and the emphasis on group rather than human rights. Yes, we shared those criticisms, but we thought then, and are even more convinced now, that it was a false judgment of the Government to withdraw.

Effectively there was a collision of two cultures. The House may recall that the time of our withdrawal in 1985 was one of the high watermarks of Thatcherism in foreign affairs. We had already suffered many damaging blows to Britain's overseas image—the overseas students, the British Council, the reductions in the World Service and or increasing isolation on South Africa. The macho image and macho isolationism which the then Government—or perhaps I should say No. 10—sought to portray was exemplified by the decision to withdraw from UNESCO. The other side of the cultural collision was the strident and negative third-worldism of the time. So the decision to withdraw was the collision of those two cultures.

My second propostion is that one of those cultures has changed. There has been a sea change in the third world. In the past few years a new realism has crept over countries that were perhaps the most strident and which the Government criticised at the time of our withdrawal from UNESCO. A new director-general who is favoured by the Government is now in place at UNESCO. Every one of the criticisms that the Government made in 1985 to justify Britain's withdrawal from UNESCO has been largely met. I might add that we are the only European Community country to have withdrawn from the organisation.

Massive progress has been made, yet the Government are impaled on the wrong decision made in 1985 and are unwilling to withdraw. One could make points about the overhang of Thatcherism and question whether there is such a thing as Majorism, but, given the new position of the Government on foreign affairs in general, I am confident that if a United Nations organisation indulged today in some of the activities which the Government and the Opposition found unwelcome, the Government would not withdraw from it.

Therefore, why do not the Government look at the realities of today, recognise the substantial progress that has been made and return into the world and this valuable United Nations organisation? Is it simply a budgetary matter—the £9 million or so that the United Kingdom would have to contribute to the budget of UNESCO?

My third and final point follows that made so well by the hon. Member for Bexleyheath. The continued delay in our rejoining UNESCO is contrary to fundamental British foreign policy interests. It isolates us, gives the wrong signal about our international policy at a key time and harms our international understanding.

There is no need to remind the House of the fundamental changes which have taken place in the past few years. As the hon. Gentleman reminded the House, the United Nations was set up in 1945 and in its organisation —for example, permanent membership of the Security Council—it reflected the power realities at the time. In this new world, with the changed power position of the United Kingdom, it is no wonder that many countries question our permanent membership of the Security Council, when we have so much to contribute.

Labour would not have withdrawn from UNESCO and, had we won the general election, a Labour Government would have rejoined it immediately. We are confident that our international standing is weakened by continued Government failure to recognise that new reality.

One American best-seller was entitled, "How to make friends and influence people." By their failure to adjust to the realities and to rejoin UNESCO, the Government are influencing people and many countries in the United Nations, but they are not making friends. That is bad for this country and the Opposition strongly urge the Government speedily to rejoin that worthy international organisation.

12.40 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I am delighted to support my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) in this Adjournment debate. I think that I have taken part in every debate in the House on this issue.

One gets the feeling that we have been pushing the rock up the hill since 1985. I hope that we have got to the top of the hill and that we shall see the rock rolling down the other side. It will enable my right hon. and learned Friend

[Mr. Jim Lester]

the Minister of State, in whom I have the greatest confidence, to make an objective assessment of our real interests.

UNESCO was started when we had a sense of international vision in Britain. We looked wide and understood what was necessary within the United Nations. That is why we are proud that, as my hon. Friend suggested, we were the founding fathers of UNESCO. I also acknowledge that the United Nations got into considerable difficulties, as we all recollect, because of the false division in the world between east and west.

We are back in a time of international vision. For the first time the UN is seen as the instrument of international policy—whether in conflict resolution or in connection with the Rio conference on the environment and development. Whatever field we choose, there is great hope and understanding that the UN will be an important player as we approach the end of this decade and the beginning of the next millennium.

Those of us who care about poverty and the situation in many third world countries recognise that UNESCO has a unique role to play—for example, in its ability to sustain and support education by modern technology and in the wider development of the UN and in bringing together the United Nations family.

It is one of my great worries that, although many people see a future for the UN and are pleased to give it responsibilities in what was Yugoslavia, in Angola and in Cambodia—I have been very much involved in those countries and am delighted that the UN is playing a role—they are, as yet, unwilling to give it the resources. We must look hard at giving the UN responsibilities and at how to ensure that resources are available to carry out the work.

On resources, I understand the problem with the budget of the Foreign Office and that the £9 million or £10 million that we need to find has already been distributed in other ways. Perhaps I am the only Member who has said in the House that the Foreign Office budget should be increased rather than decreased. It is derisory to spend £247 billion on public expenditure but to have less than £4 billion to spend on the foreign service—on overseas development, the British Council and all those instruments of internationalism for which this country is famous.

I recognise that if my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State has to deal with that sum of money, I would be one of the first, as would everyone else speaking in the debate, to suggest that the money should come from an increase in the Foreign Office budget rather than from the reallocation of scarce resources.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend realises that the time has now come to rejoin UNESCO. The Americans have crawled all over the budget and found that UNESCO has reformed and changed its operations dramatically. Only last night it formed a committee of 12 wise men to oversee the control of its finances and to ensure financial probity. That is what we have pressed for. This debate should be the last one in which we ask the Government carefully to reconsider the matter. The time has come to rejoin UNESCO, certainly within this parliamentary term.

12.45 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): When Britain left UNESCO, my colleagues opposed the decision, both outside and inside the House. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) for putting the issue back on the agenda so early in this Parliament. I am not here simply in a personal capacity. My right hon. Friends the Members for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), the leader and foreign affairs spokesman of my party, have asked me to say that we are keen that the Government should respond positively to the calls from both sides of the House.

I have two simple points to make. First, it is timely to rejoin UNESCO now, in the light of the changed perception and agenda of the United Nations and our closer integration in Europe. It would be illogical to move closer to our partners in Europe and at the same time to remain separate from one of the United Nations bridge-building mechanisms. Secondly, although we opposed the decision to leave UNESCO, we understood why the Government withdrew—the internal management and personalities. Those matters have been directly and comprehensively addressed and will continue to be.

Therefore, I hope that the Government will recognise that the reasons for their attitude at the time no longer apply. We should rejoin UNESCO with enthusiasm before the end of this calendar year.

12.46 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): This is my first opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. I hope that your ties become the traditional style of the Chairman of Ways and Means.

This has been a model Adjournment debate. The issue is an important one and is self-contained. My hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) introduced it in a speech of admirable lucidity and conciseness, and several hon. Members have participated with speeches showing the same characteristics.

My hon. Friend pointed out that he raised the matter last July. Consequently, many of the arguments material to the debate have already been rehearsed in detail, so it is not necessary for me to go through them today. That being so, I should like to speak in general terms.

As the House will know, we left UNESCO in 1986 for the reasons that were rather well described by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). I know that he thinks that we made a mistake in leaving, but he fairly described the kind of considerations that caused us to make that decision. Essentially, the organisation was being increasingly politicised and the spending and policy priorities were unsustainable. As all who spoke in the debate emphasised, substantial improvements and changes have been made to UNESCO and its organisation. I shall touch briefly on a few.

First, we welcome the decision that states, not individuals, should sit on the executive board. That will give a much greater sense of direction and coherence to the management and running of the organisation's affairs. Secondly, I welcome the decision to appoint an expert group on financial and administrative matters which will

certainly assist the executive board in the conduct of UNESCO. We look forward to the time when the group starts to operate.

I also welcome the fact that there has been a full review of the office of public information, carried out, I am glad to say, by a British firm of consultants. It was funded by the ODA and it has produced far-reaching proposals which include reducing the number of staff employed in the office and developing a proper strategy. I am glad, too, that the director-general has expressed his willingness to implement the reforms advocated.

Another encouraging development is the fact that UNESCO has agreed to co-operate with the survey of the United States General Accounting Office, acting on behalf of the Congress. We have not seen the report yet; I believe that it will be produced in June and I look forward to studying its contents. All these are encouraging developments.

The organisation is unfortunately on course for a large cash deficit by the end of this year which looks as if it will amount to about $80 million. That must be dealt with, no doubt by reducing staff numbers and prioritising spending. How UNESCO responds to this problem will clearly be relevant to the decision that we must take.

I have mentioned the reforms. Now I want to tell hon. Members where we stand on the matter. I accept that there have been genuine improvements in the way in which UNESCO runs its affairs. We therefore approach this question with a genuinely open mind, recognising that many of the problems that we identified in 1986 have been dealt with. But that fact alone is not conclusive.

I come now to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester): the money comes out of the aid budget. We reckon that the assessment on and paid by the United Kingdom will be of the order of £9 million, so we must ask ourselves how the payment of £9 million to UNESCO ranks against the other spending commitments, multilateral and bilateral, undertaken through the aid budget. My hon. Friend was good enough to say that he would support any attempt to secure extra funds to cover the amount—jolly nice of him—but, influential as his support is, I could not guarantee that he or I would be successful in the attempt.

We are in the business of trying to determine where £9 million is best spent. Incidentally, the indirect costs of membership should also be considered. For instance, I have to decide how best to deploy personnel in the Foreign Office. We are busily trying to open up embassies in eastern Europe, and quite right too. Are the resource implications of UNESCO such as to balance favourably against expanding personnel and establishments elsewhere?

This is not code for saying that we will not join; I am saying that we have a genuine assessment of priorities to make. There has been great improvement and many of the difficulties we identified have been addressed, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe said, we must make an assessment of our points of interest and see where the benefits and priorities lie. We must measure spending through UNESCO as against spending under other parts of our aid budget. We shall reach a conclusion in an open-minded way, taking into account the powerful arguments that have been advanced today, notably by my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath.

Mineral Extraction and Tipping (South Essex)

12.54 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise in the House the subject of the impact of mineral extraction and the tipping of waste on the environment of south Essex. I shall speak of the wider county, but obviously I have an unashamed and vested interest in the borough of Thurrock, which I represent.

I am pleased to see the Parliamentary Under-Secretary in his place, for he has an association with Thurrock. He was the Conservative candidate there in 1979, after which he was dispatched to, or departed the area for, other places. I welcome the fact that he is to reply to the debate, because he will recall some of the environment and geography to which I shall refer. I extend to him a sincere invitation to join me and the borough council in looking at some of those areas at a mutually convenient date.

I raise the issue because the present situation is grossly unfair to the people of Thurrock and the surrounding areas in south Essex. The area has suffered considerably from the rapacious appetite of the sand and gravel industry and from its twin industry, the disposers of waste. It is appropriate, therefore, that I should refer to some of the problems that are faced by people in the area and I shall deal with some remedies that could be prompted or initiated by government.

The first issue is the disappointment I feel when I hear my constituents blame the borough council. They do not realise that it is not the borough council's fault or responsibility. The stewardship, or control and governing, of mineral extraction and the management of waste disposal are for the county council and I am anxious to have that on the record. Indeed, the borough council has done everything possible to frustrate these continuing twin industrial problems.

The county planning authority and other county councils—I am not criticising exclusively Essex county council—are too compliant and submissive in giving way to the demands of the two industries to which I am referring. There is always a presumption that they must find from within their areas new pits from which to extract sand and gravel and into which waste can be filled. I do not accept the old maxim of TINA—there is no alternative—for there are alternatives if there is the political will to find them. Much more gravel extraction could be gained from the sea. There is the technology and knowledge to do more recycling of minerals. We require legislation and leadership from the Government.

Similarly, in the whole area of the disposal of waste, much more could be done quickly. Unhappily, only 2 or 3 per cent. of waste is currently recycled. The former Secretary of State for the Environment, now translated to Hong Kong, told a Conservative party conference a few years ago that it was his hope and intention to increase the recycling of domestic waste. He believed that 25 per cent. could be recycled by the year 2000.

I welcomed his initiative at the time, but there is no sign that we are anywhere near on target towards achieving that objective. I appreciate that the Under-Secretary may be an innocent in the matter, having recently taken on his responsibilites, but I hope that, as a result of today's

[Mr. Andrew Mackinlay]

debate, he will look into the issue to see whether the Government can pick up on the commitment given by Chris Patten a few years ago.

The Minister ought also to be on guard regarding the vested interests in the gravel and aggregates industry which seek to dissuade those in the business of road construction and road reconstruction from recycling waste or minerals.

As for environmental impact assessments, I welcome the European Community directive that major planning applications that have a direct impact on the environment should be subject to an environmental impact assessment. Both gravel extraction and tipping have an effect on the environment. Unfortunately, the rules do not cover some mineral extraction and tipping because it is deemed to be "too small." I hope that the Government will require all gravel extraction and the tipping of waste to be brought within the environmental impact assessment requirement.

When the Minister returns to his Department, I hope that he will examine how environmental impact assessment reports are dealt with in this country. I do not believe that we comply with either the spirit or the letter of the European directive. The European directive envisaged that EIAs would be commissioned by the local authority or the waste management authority. At present, only the applicant for planning permission can commission and pay for the environmental impact assessment. With the best will in the world, the fact is that he who pays the piper must, at least to some extent, call the tune. It is a matter of public confidence.

In the case of the applications to which I intend to refer, the EIAs were paid for by the developers. That is wrong. It is inconsistent with the European directive. I hope that the Minister will consider introducing a regulation whereby only the county council or the local planning authority can commission the EIA; even though the cost will be passed on to the applicant.

My borough has contributed greatly, for many years, to the provision of sand and gravel and to the disposal of London's waste and that of other parts of the south-east of England. Fourteen per cent. of its land surface has been given over to excavation or tipping; 5 per cent. has been taken over by the sand and gravel industry. Currently, there are 25 domestic refuse sites and six for the disposal of toxic waste. We also have five out of the eight wharves and railheads along the riverside where aggregates can be brought into the county of Essex. Another proposal, which I welcome, is that there should be a new wharf at the port of Tilbury. The road pattern there will minimise the impact of additional lorry movements in the area. One of the spin-offs of sand and gravel extraction and the disposal of waste is that lorries have to go along roads that are inappropriate for heavy lorries.

Mineral extraction has caused a dramatic change to the landscape of Thurrock. There are deep chalk workings in the west of the county, in Aveley, and alien raised mounds in the east. In the west, in Aveley, close to Havering, there is a methane problem at the Aveley 1 tip and at Aveley Court. Reinstatement of sites where there are methane problems is always enormously difficult.

My constituents and I are not NIMBYs—not in my back yard. Unhappily, so much of what I have described is already there. Some of it has been there for decades. My constituents hope that I shall be able to persuade the Minister to listen to what they say, which is, "Thus far, and no further. Enough is enough." This part of Essex has more than made its contribution to these two industries. We hope that when planning applications come before the Minister, or his successors, they will consider whether this part of Essex has been treated fairly. Recently, there have been a number of new threats to our environment, which is why I said that the line should now be drawn. Corys Environmental, substantial operators of landfill sites at east Tilbury marshes, wishes to operate electricity generation at Belvedere on the south side of the Thames at Bexley and has applied for planning permission to extend the life of its landfill site at east Tilbury marshes until 2017; raising the contouring of marshland to 35 m above the ordnance datum line. It would need that to dispose of the residues of 400,000 tonnes of ash that would be generated per annum by its new electricity station at Belvedere, if it is approved. I hope that that will be taken into account if and when that application comes before the Minister. It is absurd that we should be considering building mounds and altering the contours of attractive marshland on the banks of a river that the Almighty gave us, quite apart from the impact that it will have on wildlife and the ecological balance.

There is another matter that I hope the Minister will take on board. The President of the Board of Trade is the principal architect of the notion of regenerating the east Thames corridor. We have yet to see what is meant by that, but Corys Environmental has exploited that proposal in its planning application for east Tilbury. It has said that such regeneration will require a massive increase in the amount of aggregates available in the area and that regeneration and expansion in east London will require additional capacity for tipping waste. To some extent I suppose that that is true, but I hope that, in considering the future of the east Thames corridor, the Government will take account of the detrimental effects of the demand for additional waste facilities and of making holes in attractive green belt land.

The second danger facing my constituents is the updating of the county council's mineral plan. If it is approved, there will be extended extraction at Waltons lane, in east Tilbury marshes and elsewhere in Tilbury, Chadwell at Kemps farm—South Ockendon, and Ayletts. This morning, I spoke to the headmaster of East Tilbury junior school, Mr. Beynon, who told me that he and the head of the infant school had noticed that 16 per cent. of pupils suffer from asthma and chest-related complaints. In their experience, that was extraordinarily high. I ask the Minister to consider whether he can prompt some health investigation into whether dust, which comes from the Ayletts working and which is inert, is a source of aggravation to the health of children and adults in and around east Tilbury.

I am concerned that updating the mineral plan will dramatically alter the open areas of green belt in and around east Tilbury and Chadwell and will mean a great loss to a borough that is not wealthy and to which the industrial revolution and the 20th century have not been particularly kind. Green belt land in Thurrock is precious. It must be zealously guarded by the local authorities and the Secretary of State. In my small way, I hope to play a part by pressing the Minister to safeguard the green belt in the borough of Thurrock.

I shall provide some examples of the problems of the gravel extraction industry and the filling of holes with

waste. What I have to say relates not only to Thurrock but to the rest of the United Kingdom. There is a presumption by the industries—and to some extent by county councils—that if there is a hole, waste should be put in it. That is a great pity. Of course, there are great profits to be made from the disposal of waste. If holes have to be made in the ground for the extraction of minerals that cannot be obtained elsewhere, we should take a long hard look to see whether recreational use could be made of the pits or holes. We should also ensure that they remain environmentally attractive and that public access is not diminished because of dangers, whether through the existence of the pits lying dormant or what is put in them.

That brings me to an issue on which I hope that the Minister can comment today. Unhappily, we do not know what is put into many of the holes created by mineral extraction in Thurrock or elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The Select Committee on the Environment drew attention to that a little while ago. Its report stated that the Committee was

"appalled at the poor standards and patchy coverage"

of the official statistics on United Kingdom landfill sites. It urged the Department of the Environment to develop a national landfill data base and to examine the feasibility of forecasting future landfill supply and demand in order to provide a firmer basis for a co-ordinated strategic policy on waste.

That is sound advice, for two reasons. First, we should ensure that holes in the ground that have been created by mineral extraction are not automatically filled with waste and that there is a correlation between extraction and landfill. Secondly, we must ensure that sites on which waste is dumped are filled.

In a nutshell, there is a great deal of competition and there are more holes in the ground than are necessary for landfill in Thurrock and elsewhere. Firms go bust and often there are insufficient records about what goes into the holes. They are not fully sealed or capped and sometimes they are eventually reopened. That can cause enormous problems and health hazards for local residents—vermin, escaping methane and appalling smells.

Incidentally, as I have invited the Under-Secretary to come to Thurrock, I hope that he will do so on an afternoon like yesterday when there was a huge stench in and around east Tilbury. My telephone was buzzing about it. The stench is an acute problem on hot days. It is caused by the rotting minerals, dust and rubbish which have been put into pits in that area of Essex. It is unacceptable and unfair to the residents and also prejudices the value of their property.

The county council has produced a mineral plan to which I referred, but it is flawed in one important respect. There is a north-south divide in Essex. I have read the small print of the county's mineral plan and I hope that when it arrives on the Secretary of State's desk, he will pay attention to page 16 of the updated plan. He will see that the north part of Essex had more extensive research undertaken into what minerals were available for extraction and what the impact on the environment would be than was the case in south Essex. That is bonkers and unfair. I shall raise the issue with the county council, but I suspect that if there is a disparity of treatment within one county about the ground rules for examining whether minerals can and should be extracted, there must be a disparity between counties.

The criteria applied when determining whether minerals should be extracted in Surrey might not be the same as those applied in Essex or Buckinghamshire. That is unfair. We seek leadership and guidance from the Department of the Environment to ensure parity of treatment and parity of consideration as to where it is least environmentally damaging for the gravel extraction industry digs its holes to extract minerals.

I shall cover the other matters that I wish to raise in a few moments, to allow the Under-Secretary to reply. Most of what I have said relates to the eastern side of my constituency—east Tilbury and, especially, Linford. There are also grounds for concern about an area near the boundary with the London borough of Havering where, in Romford road, Aveley, it is intended to open a new tip for dumping rubbish on a 31 hectare site, where waste disposal will take place for nine and a half years.

I do not believe that my constituents fully appreciate what that means. Unfortunately, that often happens. people do not understand until it is too late what the impact of a planning permission being granted for such a site would be on their lives. If, through this debate, I can indirectly alert my constituents to the threat, and persuade them to mount serious objections to the proposal, I shall not have introduced the debate in vain.

The local council is resisting the plan and so is the local county councillor Reg Lee. I pay tribute to him, and to county councillor Gerard Rice, too. Those two, together with councillor Barry Palmer, the sole representative of east Tilbury, have stood like Horatius and his colleagues on the bridge, resisting the rapacious appetites of the sand and gravel industry and of those who wish to tip waste in my part of Essex.

The Secretary of State should consider taking legislative powers to ensure that the environmental impact assessment reports are consistent with the European directive. County councils should be required to have joint plans, matching mineral extraction to plans for waste disposal. In fairness, district councils, too, should be more involved in planning decisions on the extraction of minerals and the dumping of waste.

Finally, the Government should consider whether there should be a form of bonding for people who wish to open and exploit tips, to ensure that when, or if, the companies go bust, the sites can be properly capped, landscaped and made safe. We should ensure that knowledge of what has been put into the tips is retained.

I am grateful for the House's time. This is an issue which is important both to my constituents and, I suspect, those of other hon. Members. We are charged with defending our constituents' little bit of green England and I do not think that it has caused any harm for the House to pause and listen to the problems of the people of Thurrock, faced with the attack from the twin industries of gravel extraction and waste disposal. I hope that my comments will also have been of some use to hon. Members who face similar problems elsewhere in south-east England.

1.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I congratulate the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) on obtaining this

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

debate so soon in the new Parliament. As he said, I know his constituency well as I contested it in 1979, and I retain a real affection for Thurrock and the surrounding areas.

The hon. Gentleman has spoken eloquently about the concerns of his constituency and about the impact that gravel extraction and waste disposal can have on the environment. I recognise the concern about the review of the Essex minerals subject plan. The Government are committed to a development plan-led planning system for minerals and waste disposal. Arrangements introduced in the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 made important changes to bring that into effect. There is now a duty on planning authorities to produce up-to-date mineral and waste plans. I understand that Essex county council is currently reviewing its minerals subject plan and its waste plan.

It is, therefore, important that there should be a full public debate to inform the preparation of the plans. I know that the review of the minerals subject plan has generated concern about the possibility that several sites in the vicinity of east Tilbury may be included in a future plan. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I cannot comment further on that. However, I am advised that the review is at an early stage and that the county council has not taken any decision at present. The hon. Gentleman and others concerned will wish to discuss their concerns further with the county council. The hon. Gentleman also mentioned some specific planning applications which cause him concern. I am sure that he also appreciate that it would not be proper for me to comment on any planning applications that may yet come before my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

The Government appreciate that the extraction of aggregates and the disposal of waste are matters of rising public concern and it may be helpful if I explain how the Government are addressing the issue. That may enable the hon. Gentleman to put the problems of his constituency in the wider context.

Present policy for the extraction of aggregates—by which we mean sand, gravel and crushed rock such as limestone and granite—is set out in minerals planning guidance note 6, of which I am sending the hon. Gentleman a copy. It was published in 1989 and we are now reviewing it. The first step in the review was the preparation of long-term forecasts of aggregates demand. Demand for aggregates is generated by a proper and natural desire for improvements in our standard of living. That means improvements to our transport infrastructure, especially roads and railways, and improvements in hospitals, housing and water quality. However, we recognise that the environmental consequences of meeting the demand for aggregates must be very carefully examined and balanced.

The forecasts, which were commissioned from independent consultants, were published last May. They showed that with steady growth in the economy, the demand in England and Wales could increase to between 421 million tonnes and 490 million tonnes a year over the next 20 years. That represents an increase in demand below the level of growth experienced in the past 40 years. When we published the forecasts, we stressed that they do not represent Government plans and they are not targets for production which the minerals industry must meet. They are forecasts. It is important, therefore, that they should be considered as defining a problem rather than as providing a solution.

We have asked the aggregates industry and local authorities, plus a wide range of other interests, to consider the medium and long-term implications of the forecasts. We are seeking advice on how demand in each region might be met and the extent to which one part of the country can contribute to the requirements of other parts. The hon. Gentleman recognises that minerals can be worked only where they arise and that means that some parts of the country have to contribute to areas where there is a deficiency. We have also asked for views about the environmental consequences of increases in the extraction of land-won minerals.

We are firmly committed to the principle of sustainable development. That means that we need to look at how finite resources can be used in the most efficient way. We made it clear in the environment White Paper that we want to see an increase in the use of waste and recycled materials in line with the principles of sustainable development. Such waste materials include secondary aggregates, such as china clay sand, colliery minestone, slate wastes and construction and demolition wastes. We also wish to see greater exploitation of materials such as power station ash, and steel and blast furnace slag. At present, the use of secondary materials represents less than 10 per cent. of the current production of aggregates. We are determined that that figure should increase—and increase substantially.

It is, of course, important that there should be careful use of resources and that there should not be overspecification for aggregates in construction use, because that can limit the amount of recyclable material that can be used. Research is going on into the specifications on aggregates in construction to see whether action is necessary to prevent unnecessary or excessive use of valuable natural resources. The report will be produced shortly and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the Government will look carefully at any proposals that will facilitate a more efficient use of aggregates.

We have taken initiatives and commissioned research to examine other possible sources of aggregate supply. In one project, we are looking at the potential for large-scale coastal quarries or superquarries such as that at Glensanda in Scotland to supply aggregates to the south-east of England. The research is examining potential areas of supply, including Scotland, Ireland, Norway and Spain. The consultants are also researching the environmental and economic consequences of supplying materials in that manner. We hope to publish the report in September.

We recognise that it is essential to continue to raise environmental standards in the minerals industry. That is why, last year, we commissioned Groundwork Associates to explore the scope for new initiatives to improve the environmental performance of the minerals industry and its report was published last year. I also warmly welcome the environmental codes of practice published recently by the two principal trade associations, the Sand and Gravel Association and British Aggregate Construction Materials Industries which represent an important step forward and show that the aggregates industry has resolved to take firm action to improve its performance in environmental standards.

The initiatives that I have outlined show beyond doubt that the Government understand public concern about

minerals extraction. We are determined that the minerals industry should operate in an environmentally responsible manner and I am confident that the adoption of high standards is in the interests of the operators.

Mineral extraction often provides an opportunity for waste disposal. The deposit of waste can be used in the restoration of a site to turn what might otherwise be a visual scar into an area that may be used for recreation, as the hon. Gentleman suggests. That is one reason why landfill is likely to remain the predominant method of waste disposal for many years to come and, in our view, it remains a perfectly acceptable option given the right local circumstances and high environmental standards.

Modern landfill techniques are highly sophisticated. Provided that best practice guidance is followed and the legislative controls are adhered to, they should represent no threat to human health or the environment.

In determining whether a site is suitable for landfilling waste, investigation must be undertaken of the geology and hydrogeology of the land and careful assessment made of the types of waste that may safely be disposed of there. The character of the locality and the likely impact of the landfill on the quality of the local environment all need to be taken into account.

The current planning legislation, including the general development orders and the environmental impact assessment regulations, provide ample opportunity for the development and control aspects of a landfill site to be taken into consideration and for all interested parties to give their opinion on proposed disposal sites.

I listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said about environmental impact assessments. All our EIA regulations fully comply with European legislation. Once planning permission has been granted for a landfill site, the operator must apply for a disposal licence under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 before operations can commence. The licensing procedure provides the opportunity for more detailed technical assessment by waste disposal experts, in consultation with the National Rivers Authority, to determine whether, or under what conditions, the proposed operations will be safe in the locality chosen.

Part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which we have recently started to implement, will replace the 1974 legislation and introduce even more stringent controls over waste management practice. The licensing controls that will be available to waste regulation authorities under the Act will not end when the operator has finished work on the site, but will continue to bite after the site has ceased to receive waste. Once the site has stopped accepting waste, operators will be required not only to restore and landscape it but to continue to monitor and carry out any necessary works that may arise until the waste regulation authorities are satisfied that there is no possibility of future pollution arising. That may be as long as 30 years after waste has ceased to be deposited. Only then will the operator be permitted to surrender his licence.

Let me come back to waste in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I hope that I have helped to clarify how national policy guidance is being developed to reflect increasing public concerns about environmental matters. The increased emphasis on a plan-led planning system provides the right opportunity for those wider policy issues to be fully addressed in the local context. The review of the mineral subject plan in which the county council is at present engaged will provide an open—it must be open—and informed forum for debate about matters of concern to local residents before any decisions need to be taken. I hope that today's debate will form part of that informed public debate. I hope also that the hon. Gentleman will be reassured that the positive action that we have taken in recognition of public concern about the impact of mineral and waste sites will ensure that the highest environmental standards can be achieved in his constituency.

Car and Components Industry

1.30 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the House today. I was fortunate to be elected unopposed as joint chairman of the all-party motor industry group. In that context, I will be as impartial in my committee as you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and your colleagues in the Chair are in the House, to ensure that the all-party nature of my committee continues to be so successful.

I spent 20 years in the car and car components industry before coming to the House. I worked in a tyre factory on the edge of my constituency. I continue my interest in tyres and advise the National Tyre Distributors Association.

I am grateful at being successful in the ballot for this debate. The car and car components industry is very important and it is poised to face challenges. It is successful, but it is almost at the crossroads of a new future in which more companies will merge and there will be further inward industrial development from overseas and particularly from Japan.

So far, we have not seen a huge change, for example, in joint ventures in component industries, but no doubt the completion of the single market will add an edge to such ventures. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry for giving up his valuable day to comment on this important subject.

I believe that we have gained through improvements to productivity in components and particularly in car manufacturing. Leading car manufacturing companies have told me that we are now very close to best European practice. By 1996, we shall probably have exceeded that and factories, such as Ford factories, will be at least at best European productivity standards. That is vital.

Our economy has become attractive to investors. People in firms that want to build cars or car components, after scratching their heads and checking their computers, consider our control of inflation, our increase in productivity and our huge changes to industrial relations. My main reason for becoming a Member of this place in 1979 was my involvement in manufacturing industry and the car industry and my frustration with trade union practices.

I was fortunate to be Parliamentary Private Secretary to Mr. Norman Tebbit, the former right hon. Member for Chingford, in the critical five years during the early 1980s when we gave trade union members the rights that they had longed for in respect of democracy through secret ballots.

Overseas investors believe that those changes are important. They regard our achievement after the general election of a stable Government as a unique and important part of their decisions. They will not have to face changes imposed by a Government of a different political view and ideology. They will have my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, his excellent colleagues and his excellent Back Benchers to show them the way to stability. I apologise to the House for being so self-congratulatory, but such points are important when one talks to people who are looking for investment. It might seem silly—almost like a farce—but such factors are important when people look at a country with stability, low wage costs, high productivity and the keenest knowledge, expertise, training and skills in producing cars and car components. In my view, the United Kingdom is now the best placed country in Europe to manufacture cars and car components.

Therefore, we must be vigilant and careful about how every aspect of Government and European Commission policy affects our business in the car and car component industry. That is why I am most worried about the recent publicity given to car prices and the subsequent report of the European Commission.

It was most important that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission should examine car retailing carefully. It came up with several recommendations including that car dealerships should become multi-franchised. In my old industry that was common practice. One sold different makes of tyres and other components and there was never a problem. However, I can see that in the car retail industry multi-franchised dealer outlets would pose difficulties in terms of stocking components and replacements and giving service for different makes of vehicle. So that discussion will have to continue.

In addition, after detailed consultation the MMC carefully examined retail prices of cars in the United Kingdom. It concluded that there was no substantial difference between retail pricing in the United Kingdom and that in other countries. As my right hon. Friend the Minister knows, that conclusion was made after a detailed consultation involving just about everyone involved.

Subsequently Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan has apparently produced a report. I say apparently because it is one of those reports which are difficult to get hold of. It was first covered in *The Sunday Times*. At least one major motor manufacturer has said that at the time the only information that it had about the report was from the media. Surely that is not the right way to introduce a report which affects a huge industry directly employing more than 750,000 people. Customers who had read the reports in the media had doubts about whether to go ahead and buy motor cars. They thought that if they waited, and if Mr. Bangemann agreed and Sir Leon Brittan was right, they might obtain lower prices. Indeed, that is a major factor.

The Commission report has resulted in a slowdown in sales at dealers. Dealers contact manufacturers in puzzlement and ask what they should do if people come in and say, "We have read in the papers that the Commission will reduce prices." As a constituency Member of Parliament, one is always pleased to see prices reduced for one's constituents and consumers in general, but with a constituency in the heart of England where car and car component manufacturers surround me, it is also vital that I consider the jobs, stability and future of the industry.

Therefore, I find it extraordinary that the report from the European Commission appears to have been drawn up without consultation, without direct communication with the major car manufacturers or the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. It appears to have used a different way of calculating the index of price comparison from that used by the MMC. The MMC sensibly used all the factors involved, such as the specification of the car, extras and how much they are worth, and what discount is given.

We are used to discounts in the United Kingdom. We might not bargain as people do in southern parts of Europe. When we buy a pullover, perhaps at a superb shop not too far from Victoria street, Marks and Spencer or C and A, we would not dream of bargaining. But the

moment that one goes to a car dealer one is ready to bargain for one's new car, because one knows that that is how it is done. People bargain for a new tyre or a new exhaust system, so discounts must be taken into consideration. The EMU, curency differentials and other factors must be used to calculate a true comparison between the price of cars is one wants it to be effective. The MMC did that, but the European Commission apparently did not. It used a snapshot approach which, in one case, covered five different factors but certainly did not allow for any adjustment for the equivalency of currencies. It is outrageous that such a report should have apparently been so secretive, that it should have been leaked to the media and that it did not use the right methodology to ensure that it gave an equivalent comparison.

I was told by Vauxhall, which has carried out an assessment of its dealers, that its prices are comparable with similar European markets. If we examine the 1989 example of a car which was supposed to be 41 per cent. more expensive here, taking into account all the factors that I outlined, we find that it would have been cheaper to buy a Ford Sierra, on an equivalent basis, in the United Kingdom than in France or Germany. Why does the European Commission report apparently say that we are overpricing our cars? According to the press, Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan has even said that he will consider using European law to implement the report.

To come to what is probably the most important part of my speech—I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and our right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will think carefully and review their attitude to this matter. The MMC was right and the industry has moved to adopt many of its conclusions, which differ from those of the European Commission. Even within the Commission—again according to the media—Commissioners Martin Bangemann and Sir Leon Brittan were at odds on the matter.

Despite all those problems, there have been successes, but they should not be jeopardised during the next few years by giving up an agreement on cars imported from Japan, due to the tenderness of our industry's enormous recovery in productivity. The voluntary agreement between the SMMT and Japan Association of Automobile Manufacturers, JAMA, has been highly successful and has kept the number of cars directly imported from Japan to a reasonable level. We have been extremely successful in encouraging inward investment and "transplants"—a strange term—from Japan. I wish that we had been even more successful. That has created 60 or 70 per cent. of local content and an awful lot of jobs for the car components industry, which is important. That is why the encouragement of joint ventures is vital for the car component industry in the future.

It seems that the Government—judging from some of their comments—are not prepared to agree to the new European Commission proposal on the restriction of imports from Japan. While I am normally a free marketeer, I think that we need a transition period without a free market with Japan, which has an unfair base of operations due to the level of the yen and Japan's direct and indirect import controls. Let hon. Members try selling a Rover, Land-Rover, Jaguar or Peugeot to the Japanese. They would find that it is difficult. Yet the reverse is not true. Therefore, it is not a non-free-market solution to say that it should be knock for knock. Until Japan opens its markets, we should carefully control ours in exactly the same way. As it increases our opportunity to export cars there, we should allow more imports. The SMMT-JAMA voluntary agreement ends at the end of this year and some form of control is important, so I urge the Government to agree to the European Commission's proposals.

I shall give a few brief snap shots to illustrate the situation. Despite the recession, there have been successes. There are a number of car manufacturers, such as Land-Rover, in my constituency and others whose employees live there. Land-Rover has done well, particularly with the Discovery. Rover has done well on exports. I congratulate Peugeot on doing particularly well at Ryton. Many of my constituents work there: it is just up the road from Meriden. To achieve the Queen's award for exports is super. Profits may have been reduced, but they remain substantial and effective. Vauxhall, too, has done extremely well with the Cavalier and other models. Despite the restrictive home market, it has done well in fleet sales and exports. Ford, too, has done extremely well during the recession, again mainly in exports.

When I was first elected to the House in 1979, British car and car component exports were dismal, productivity was awful, and delivery and supply incredibly bad. Now, our car and car component manufacturers are succeeding and surviving because of their exports, the quality of their cars and the low cost of their cars due to productivity. Britain is, indeed, a good place to make cars and car components.

I suggest that the Government look again at the crippling effects of the national insurance contribution and of tax on company cars. There is an £18,000 limit on company cars. We are talking not about benefits in kind for rich company directors but about tools of the trade, Sierras, Cavaliers and Montegos, that are used by salesmen to sell British products. Will my hon. Friend the Minister please suggest to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that he reconsider that limit? Will he further suggest that the Government increase the differential between leaded and unleaded fuels? That would be useful in helping to reduce pollution. In addition, if we reduce further the special car tax, could we not pay for that through an increased differential, making polluting leaded fuels more expensive to pay for a further reduction in special car tax, and so encourage more car sales?

We have one of the lowest levels in Europe for the purchase of diesel cars. Ecologically speaking, diesel is certainly a useful fuel in terms of reduced consumption and improved efficiency. Will my hon. Friend please encourage its use?

I know that time is running out. I shall finish with a plea that may seem unusual but is not when one thinks about it. My hon. Friend may recall that I have chaired the Trademark Committee for several years. Car and car component companies have strongly branded products. There is a mark name and brand name for each vehicle. Industry in general is anxious that we make early progress on introducing our trademark Bill which will harmonise our system with the Community directive. My hon. Friend may not be able to reply to this slightly oblique point, but it is important to car manufacturers and others. France, Germany, Spain, Italy and most other European countries have harmonised ahead of the deadline in 1992. May we please consider the Bill which has been debated in the other place? I saw some hope in the remarks of Lord Wakeham that we might consider it this Session. If we do

[Mr. Iain Mills]

not introduce the Bill by the end of this Session, there will be problems in registering trademarks and this may jeopardise the extremely important Madrid protocol.

1.48 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) on his election as joint chair of the all-party motor industry group and I thank him for his co-operation in cutting down his speech to allow me to speak today.

The motor industry, its manufacturers and associated components suppliers have suffered badly as a result of the recession. The hon. Gentleman and I both come from the midlands, which have suffered particularly badly.

Today I want to discuss not the effects of the recession, but the longer-term problems that the industry faces. One major manufacturer, General Motors, has estimated that by 1995 there could be up to 19 per cent. overcapacity in Europe. That could mean the closure of between nine and 13 car plants across Europe. The industry faces major challenges in respect of the environment in the coming years and it will have to meet those challenges.

The hon. Member for Meriden mentioned Japanese transplants. Of course, at one level inward investment is to be welcomed, but it is important to emphasise that Japanese interest in Britain is based not on an overwhelming desire to bolster the British economy but on a desire to capture increased markets. The experience of the USA shows that unless this investment is handled properly it can have problematic results. In the USA, where Japanese investment has massively increased, for every job created in the car industry about four were lost. Britain is different—we have a much stronger components supply base and we are better placed to cope with these problems, but unless the Government take their responsibilities seriously at local, national and European levels, we are in for problems.

Some useful local initiatives have already begun. I commend to the Minister the activities of groups such as the Motor Industry Local Authority Network which, interestingly, goes under the name of MILAN. It is doing useful and valuable research into the kinds of policies needed at local authority level across Europe to cope with some of these problems. Useful work is also being done at the European Parliament by MEP Carole Tongue and there is a working party looking into the challenges facing the European motory industry.

The need for a national strategy is also vital, to take action to underpin the sort of training, research and investment initiatives that are already being attempted by local authorities and others. Such initiatives need to be delivered locally but must be backed up nationally. It is also important that Britain plays its full part in developing a European strategy for the motor industry—protecting it where development is needed against problems that may be created by too rapid involvement in Japanese transplants. To cope with the long-term structural problems, it is vital that we play our full part in the economic, environmental and social affairs of Europe. That is why it is much to be regretted that such aspects were omitted from the Maastricht treaty and that the British Government sought opt-outs from them.

In the interests of the motor industry, which is so vital to my constituents, I ask the Minister to take these initiatives. We are all pleased about the improvement in industrial relations in the motor industry, but the people who work and lead their lives in it and produce the goods on which the success of the British motor industry is based must be given a full say in its future.

1.53 pm

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) on giving the House this opportunity to debate this most important industry. I join others who have congratulated him on becoming joint chairman of the all-party motor committee. I know that he will bring a great deal of knowledge to that position. I am also delighted to have the chance to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on being in the Chair. I hope that our partnership in the Chamber will prove as effective as it has been on behalf of the House on the tennis court.

I appreciate that conditions have been very difficult in the domestic market over the past year, but I am greatly encouraged by the way in which our car manufacturers have coped. Like my hon. Friend, I congratulate them on their export achievements. The motor industry is well aware of the importance of exports. The additional sales enable development expenditure to be spread over longer runs. Exporting helps to keep one in touch with developments in other countries and to measure one's products against the best in the world. As we saw last year, exports provide a counter to fluctuations in home demand. I am confident that the industry will seek to build on the export achievements it has already made.

As my hon. Friend said, we saw last year further progress in making improvements in quality and productivity. Such developments have been marked in the industry in recent years. I am encouraged to note that domestic demand is now picking up. At 138,106 units, new car sales in April were 9 per cent. up on a year ago. It was the first month-on-month increase since October 1989 and has helped to stabilise the previously falling levels of domestic car production.

For the motor industry, as for every industry, the business environment in which it operates is of vital importance. My hon. Friend referred to some of the changes that the Government have made. They have succeeded in providing an environment in which business can—and is encouraged to—succeed. We have reduced regulation, removed administrative burdens and brought inflation down. We must, of course, do more and ensure that our inflation level is one of the lowest, if not the lowest, in the European Community.

Decisions about major investment projects are particularly important in the motor industry. They are likely to take several years to complete and are among the most difficult and complex faced by any business. Such decisions have in the past been even more difficult because of the impossibility of predicting with confidence the inflation rate or the interest rate during and after the investment work.

Other actions that the Government have taken to help the motor industry and other industries have included reducing the burden of taxation not only for companies, but for individuals. The motor industry, like all industries, derives much strength from the component suppliers, to

which my hon. Friend referred. Many of those are small businesses and my hon. Friend will be aware of the steps that we have taken to encourage small businesses.

The motor industry, like the rest of British industry, will also benefit from the initiatives that the Government have launched to encourage innovation and to strengthen the links between the academic and business worlds, particularly in research and development. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for highlighting the value to the industry of the Government's step-by-step reform of industrial relations and trade union law. We should not underestimate the importance of the legislation to the revival of the British motor industry, and I am glad that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) recognises that.

Changes in working practices have been a vital part of the increases in productivity. Clearly, they could not have come about under the old arrangements. Such improvements represent the way forward if British manufacturers are to be as good as any in the world in productivity terms.

A further benefit is coming to the industry with the completion of the single European market. I welcome the adoption of the EC whole vehicle type approval system for new cars from the beginning of next year. We shall have to get used to referring to the ECWVTA. It will be of help to the industry.

I noted carefully the points made by my hon. Friend about the special car tax. He knows that such matters are for the Chancellor of the Exchequer and will not expect me to respond to him. I assure him that the points he made will be drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friend. I also noted his comments about diesel as a fuel.

My hon. Friend then dealt with the important question of trade marks. I regret that it has not been possible to find time for a trademarks Bill in the present Session. I appreciate that it is wanted by business in relation to meeting our EC obligations. My hon. Friend will appreciate that there was much competition for time from other measures.

I apologise if I am not able to deal with all the points that hon. Members have raised, having been left somewhat short of time in which to reply. I am not complaining because it was important for the House to hear what they said.

I noted what my hon. Friend said about the European Commission's study of car prices and have seen the letter from our former colleague, Sir Hal Miller. The President of the Board of Trade will be replying to that letter shortly. I do not think that it would be appropriate for me to comment on Sir Hal's remarks about the way in which the Commission undertook its work. However, international comparison of car prices is a particularly complex exercise. So is comparison between separate studies undertaken by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the one side and the European Commission on the other. Careful examination of the methodologies and findings of the two studies reveals far more similarities than differences. The main differences were in the presentation of the results and this reflected differences between the objectives of the studies.

I look forward to strengthening my contacts with the motor industry. I have already visited Land-Rover at Solihull. I look forward to visiting Longbridge at an early date. The British car industry has responded positively and effectively to a period of difficult home market conditions. That response demonstrates clearly that we can be confident that the industry has an excellent future.

Broadgreen District General Hospital

2 pm

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for providing me with the opportunity to combine my first speech in the House with this Adjournment debate. As it is my first opportunity, may I add to those of my hon. Friends my congratulations to you on the achievement of your current position.

If the Minister will allow, I shall attend briefly to the conventions of a maiden speech before moving on to raise the concerns expressed by many of my constituents during the election campaign, both by members of staff who work at what is now Broadgreen NHS hospital trust and by residents who are worried about the future of what they describe as their local hospital.

The constituency of Broadgreen, on the eastern approaches to the city of Liverpool, encompasses the communities of Childwall and Wavertree to the south and Broadgreen, Knotty Ash, Old Swan, and Kensington to the north and west, at the end of the M62 motorway. For too many years, as a result of the application of unrestrained market forces, the M62 has been the only avenue for advancement open to many young people in Liverpool: southwards to London and to Europe.

People have wondered about the robust nature of Liverpool politics, but I would respectfully suggest that a local journalist and friend of mine, Ian Williams, got it right when he said, "If you give a city third world economics, why should you be surprised if you get third world politics?" Faced with dramatic demographic change, the people of Liverpool have struggled to find a way forward. The political divisions thrown up there should provide no comfort to the Conservative party. They are a symptom of the continuing decline of the local economy and the hardship that that has created for the people.

Liverpool people have shown great courage and dignity in the teeth of their troubles, turning aside attacks upon them with wit and gritty determination. My predecessor, Mr. Terry Fields, was an example of that determination when he demonstrated that he had the courage of his convictions. An unholy alliance of Conservative stubbornness over the poll tax and the Trotskyist need for a martyr meant that he was indeed convicted for his convictions. A sincere man, he took the rap for the real villains on both sides of that unhappy affair. I wish Mr. Fields a prosperous career outside this House. I am confident that he would not have accepted the governorship of Hong Kong, even if it had been offered to him!

May I take this opportunity to say how proud I am to be the first woman Member of Parliament for Liverpool since Bessie Braddock, who represented the Exchange division for so many years and who was first elected in the heady days of 1945. How I wish that I had been sent here for the first time in similar circumstances—with my party forming the Government and looking forward to a new future for Liverpool. However, that was not to be. The result of the election places constraints upon us and has lowered our expectations.

Liverpool has, however, undergone a sea change. I am now one of many who are prepared to examine the political realities facing us and to work in partnership with whoever has the best interests of Liverpool at heart. That is what the people of Broadgreen expect, but they also expect the Government to listen and to take account of their very genuine concerns, particularly in this case—the future of their hospital.

Broadgreen hospital trust sees itself as a community hospital. It offers a comprehensive range of high quality services to the people of Broadgreen, Old Swan, West Derby, Huyton and the city's eastern surround.

In November 1989, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) raised the issue of Broadgreen hospital in a similar debate. The area health authority had commissioned a report from six eminent local clinicians called the "Pan-Liverpool Review". It examined the future of medicine in the city and many of its recommendations have been implemented successfully. However, one of its proposals was that the accident and emergency service in the city should be rationalised—to use the terminology of the marketplace, which we now have to recognise as the new ethos for what has become the health industry.

Broadgreen district general hospital, as it then was, had to face the proposed closure of its casualty department. That decision remains the stated policy objective of Liverpool health authority and was confirmed as recently as two weeks ago at a meeting of the health authority and the community health council. My purpose in raising the issue is to ask the Minister to review that decision and to take account of the following changed circumstances: first, although the population of the city may still be declining, the catchment area for Broadgreen hospital has a stable population and will show growth over the next few years as the new housing estates being built around the district become occupied.

The hospital's orthopaedic department serves the city's highest concentration of frail elderly people. The accident and emergency department acts as the gateway to this and other specialties that are provided on site.

Secondly, the hospital's medical board and the new directors of the trust oppose the closure. In October 1989, the medical board published its opposition in a letter signed by all the senior medical staff, in which they said that they were concerned that the hospital would be unable to sustain a thriving acute medical and surgical service if the accident and emergency department were to close. Members of the medical board have made it clear to me that that still remains their view and the uncertainty surrounding the proposal is causing serious problems for the trust. The creation of the trust is a reason for not closing the casualty department, but I shall deal with that later.

Thirdly, the community health council has consistently opposed the closure. In 1989, in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for West Derby, the then Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), stated that if the community health council were consistently to oppose the closure the proposal would come to Ministers for final consideration after a period of public consultation. Two years later, that public consultation has not taken place. The department is, however, scheduled to close in 1993. I urge the Minister to allow further representations to be made before action to close the department is taken. Obviously, we all wish to see it remain open.

The Secretary of State for Health has talked of allowing a period of stability to enable the traumatic changes that the Government have made to the health service to bed in. Labour Members have opposed the changes every step of

the way, and rightly so, but I agree that time must be allowed for staff to adjust to their brave new world and to show whether the Government's predictions of improved patient care can be achieved.

For Broadgreen hospital, the need for a time of consolidation and stability is great. Its staff are worn out and tired of the constant reorganisation, and the uncertainty is undermining morale. The trust has made it clear that it wishes to retain and develop its casualty department. It pioneered in Liverpool the introduction of a clinical nurse practitioner to reduce waiting times. That has been successful and it deserves support and encouragement. I hope that the Government will issue a permanent reprieve.

I always intended to make my maiden speech on this topic. However, as there has been no opportunity to raise it in a debate on health, I was pleased to be given the opportunity to raise it now and to hear what the Minister has to say. The changes caused by the establishment of an NHS trust and changes in the way in which the hospital is managed are very important factors which should be borne in mind before any final decision is taken about the future of the accident and emergency department. Public consultation is a necessary part of that process and I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say.

2.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I am glad to have this opportunity to respond to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) in a debate on the future of the hospital and to congratulate her on her success in the ballot for the Adjournment and—I had not expected this—on making her maiden speech. If she carries on in the same vein—suggesting that some of us might have been surprised by the robustness of Liverpool politics—she will win plaudits for understatement which will carry her through. I especially enjoyed learning that her predecessor would not have accepted the governorship of Hong Kong—she might care to sponsor a local competition for what governorship he would have accepted.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): Walton!

Mr. Sackville: Indeed. Broadgreen hospital has been an NHS trust hospital since 1 April 1991. The hospital has 540 beds providing a wide range of general medical services, acute care for the elderly and an adult mental illness unit. The trust is successfully meeting the health needs of the local community and progressively developing the services that it offers. Tremendous strides have been made in reducing waiting lists, with no patients waiting more than 12 months since April 1992. The number of people treated increased by 4 per cent. during the 12 months to April 1992.

A number of impressive service developments have also been made. Over the past few years £19 million of capital investment has been made at the Broadgreen site to build a new medical and geriatric block, a new purpose-built psychiatric unit and new facilities for the cardiothoracic centre. Two new consultants have recently been appointed —one to orthopaedics in September 1991 and the second to general surgery in January 1992. Other new initiatives include the establishment of a courtesy car service for transporting patients back to their homes and the appointment of a patient relations advisor who provides an extremely useful link between patients and hospital management.

As the hon. Member will know, there are a great many achievements of which the health services throughout the Mersey region can be proud. The region has the country's best record on waiting lists. No patient has waited more than two years for in-patient or day case treatment since March 1990. In-patient and day case treatments are up 5·4 per cent. on last year. In the same period, coronary artery by-pass grafts increased by 21 per cent. and hip replacements by 14·2 per cent. Mersey initiatives on drugs and AIDS, of which the hon. Lady will be well aware, continue to attract international attention. The region has eight first wave trusts, eight second wave trusts and all the remaining units are in the third wave. The trusts are treating more patients and reducing waiting lists. I took careful note of what the hon. Lady said about the need for a period of stability and I am sure that the point is well taken.

As I indicated earlier, I am aware that there is some local concern about the future of the hospital, specifically the provision of accident and emergency services. Let me give my comments some historical perspective.

In June 1989, Sir Donald Wilson, chairman of Mersey regional health authority and Professor Graeme Davies, vice-chancellor of the university of Liverpool, invited six clinicians to advise on "The Future of Medicine in the City of Liverpool". This became widely known as the pan-Liverpool review. The review centred on the 15 hospitals managed by the Liverpool and South Sefton health authorities. Some of those hospitals had already expressed an interest in becoming self-governing, which meant that the deliberations had to be pursued urgently and the report presented at the earliest opportunity. The inquiry team's report was in fact produced in September 1989 and made a number of wide-ranging recommendations on the direction that service developments should be taking over the next decade.

One area on which the group commented in detail was accident and emergency services. Communities rely extensively on their local hospital to deal with sudden illness and injury, to the extent that an accident and emergency department is often regarded as essential. That can be the source of 90 per cent. of in-patient treatment —and, because of the open-ended commitment, the justification for an array of departments on varying levels of standby. Such departments are staff intensive, which means that the replication of such provision drains resources.

At the moment, accident and emergency services for Broadgreen residents are provided by three hospitals in Liverpool and one hospital in the neighbouring St. Helens and Knowsley district. All four hospitals are situated within four miles of Broadgreen. The pan-Liverpool review concluded that with Liverpool seeking to attract staff from a falling population—for example, there was a 10 per cent. fall between 1981 and 1990—and striving to retain its share of resources, which would decrease because of moves towards resident-based funding, it would not be possible to maintain three A and E departments in Liverpool.

The review considered that the A and E department at Broadgreen hospital should close, not only because it is the smallest of the three Liverpool A and E departments, but because of its location between the A and E departments

[Mr. Sackville]

at the Royal Liverpool hospital—now a trust—Fazakerley hospital—which now forms part of the Aintree hospitals trust—and Whiston hospital—managed by the adjacent St. Helens trust.

The current position is that Liverpool district health authority is proposing to follow up the pan-Liverpool review by undertaking a study of A and E services in the city. I understand that a paper will be put forward at the forthcoming meeting of the district health authority and I imagine that the hon. Lady has heard that the matter is to be discussed. The purpose of the study is to advise the authority on the optimum future provision of A and E services in Liverpool and the implications for neighbouring communities. The study will be undertaken in the light of the recommendations of the review group into the future of medicine in the city of Liverpool—the pan-Liverpool review—of the development of a new A and E department at Fazakerley hospital and of the upgrading of the existing A and E department at Whiston hospital.

Let me make one point clear: the recommendations in the pan-Liverpool review had their genesis prior to the implementation of the NHS reforms and their emphasis was on the role of the purchaser in assessing health care need and increasing patient choice. It is clearly appropriate that the Liverpool health authority should revisit those earlier conclusions. The authority needs to consult other purchasers in Liverpool to ensure that there is co-ordinated provision of A and E facilities in the city and that the views of GPs and residents are taken into account. Those discussions must be reflected in any proposals. It is fundamental that the health authority as purchaser of services must develop a clear focus on the health needs of its population.

I understand that the study will rigorously appraise different options. In view of my earlier comments, I add specifically that there will be a systematic attempt to identify local needs and wishes, that the active involvement of GPs will be sought in all the deliberations and that the provider trusts concerned will be fully involved at all stages, as will those of their staff most closely concerned.

Although the earlier review may have suggested the closure of the Broadgreen accident and emergency department, the proposed analysis by Liverpool district health authority may lead to wholly different propositions. However, this is not the occasion for us to debate what may or may not be the outcome.

The hon. Lady spoke about consultation. Let us be absolutely clear that the proposed study will take into account the views of general practitioners and local people before it enters the period of formal consultation towards the end of the year.

The community health councils have an important role. Community health councils were created by Parliament as part of the accountability mechanism of the national health service and we have stressed their role in the development of local health services within the framework of the NHS reforms. We have emphasised their role in the development of the purchasing function. Clearly, the local CHC will be closely involved in the development of Liverpool's services. If the CHC wishes to object formally to the health authority's proposal to change services, the district health authority will refer the matter to the regional health authority and thereafter, if the RHA supports the district's proposals, the CHC's objection will be referred to Ministers. If that happens, I will consider representations from interested parties. I understand that it is hoped that the outcome of the consultations will be known in time for the first elements to be incorporated in 1993-94 contracts.

I hope that I have given the hon. Lady an idea of the position of the Department of Health on the matter. Her comments about a great deal of change having taken place in local health services are well taken. I can understand that staff and others involved feel that a period of consolidation is needed. I welcomed the hon. Lady's olive branch when she said that the reforms require a period in which to take effect and to achieve their full benefits.

I emphasise that there is no case at present for Ministers to intervene as the hon. Lady requested. The health authority is proceeding in an appropriate manner. I hope that the hon. Lady will draw some measure of reassurance from what I have said in today's debate.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Does the hon. Lady have the Minister's leave to intervene?

Mr. Sackville *indicated assent.*

Mrs. Kennedy: I want to take up an earlier point about staffing problems and about the health authority's fears that it may not be able to recruit sufficient staff to sustain three accident and emergency departments within the city. I was astonished to hear that that was one of the main factors to which the Minister referred. Surely provision for patients and patient care should be the primary concerns. There are certainly enough unemployed nurses and medical staff in the city of Liverpool to provide the staff necessary for the accident and emergency department at Broadgreen hospital.

The Minister referred to public consultation. I am assured that the community health council has been involved all the way through in discussions with the health authority and with the trust. At no stage has it been invited to make a formal comment on the proposal to close the accident and emergency unit. I should have assumed that that would come as part of the formal public consultation process. The community health council will make a formal comment in due course.

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Lady is right to raise the question of staff. It was said earlier that there could be a problem with staff recruitment. There are two points in having a review. First, in the atmosphere of the reforms, we have an entirely different basis on which to work. A reformed base review may come to a completely different analysis of the situation. Secondly, as the hon. Lady said, there may be entirely new points to raise; she mentioned some of them in her speech. All those factors must be taken into account in informal or formal consultations. I hope that the hon. Lady will play a role in that process; I am sure that she will. She will have an opportunity, both in the House and locally, to make all those points and to provide any additional ammunition that she feels is appropriate at the time.

The hon. Lady mentioned the community health council. The mechanism according to which the CHC operates in connection with any proposed closure is well laid down. There can be informal consultations and deliberations by the CHC at this stage, but only if and

when a formal closure proposal is put can the CHC lodge a formal objection under its statutory role. No doubt it will do that if the situation arises.

Let me make it clear, however, that no such move would be made—especially given the strength of local feeling to which the hon. Lady referred—unless there is a cast-iron case for making it in clinical and staff terms. The distance between one A and E department and another and the effect that an A and E closure would have on the other operations of the hospital would also be taken fully into account. I hope that the hon. Lady will draw a measure of reassurance from my remarks and I congratulate her once again on securing the debate.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

Ordered,

That so much of the Lords Message of 20th May as relates to a Joint Committee of both Houses to scrutinise delegated legislation be now considered.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Lords message considered accordingly.

Resolved,

That this House doth concur with the Lords in the said Resolution.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

CONSOLIDATION, &c, BILLS.

Ordered,

That so much of the Lords Message of 20th May as relates to the Protection of Badgers Bill [*Lords*], the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Bill [*Lords*] and the Tribunals and Inquiries Bill [*Lords*] be now considered.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Lords message considered accordingly.

Resolved,

That this House doth concur with the Lords in the said Resolution.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

Resolved,

That this House confirms the existing procedure for the nomination of the United Kingdom delegations to the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe and Western European Union.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

BANKRUPTCY (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 93 (Public Bills relating exclusively to Scotland),

That the Bill be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee. —*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Question agreed to.

HOUSE OF COMMONS MEMBERS' FUND

Ordered,

That Sir Peter Hordern, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Gordon Oakes, Mrs. Marion Roe and Sir Gerard Vaughan be appointed Managing Trustees of the House of Commons Members' Fund in pursuance of Section 2 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1939.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

HOUSE OF COMMONS MEMBERS' FUND

Ordered,

That Sir Peter Hordern, Mr. Kim Howells, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Gordon Oakes, Mrs. Marion Roe, Sir James Spicer and Sir Gerard Vaughan be appointed Managing Trustees of the Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund in pursuance of Section 1 of the Parliamentary and other Pensions Act 1987.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Mr. Michael Ancram, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mr. James Couchman, Mr. Denzil Davies, Mr. Terry Davis, Mr. Stephen Dorrell, Mr. John Horam, Dr. Kim Howells, Mr. Robert Maclennan, Mr. David Nicholson, Mr. Richard Page, Mr. Robert Sheldon, Mr. Michael Shersby, Mr. Michael Stern and Mr. Alan Williams be members of the Committee of Public Accounts.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Laura Davies

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

2.28 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): There can be no one in the House, or in the country, who does not know of the case of my small constituent, Laura Davies. Her story and that of her family's struggle with bureaucracy is harrowing and raises important and fundamental questions of principle which I believe have not been properly addressed by the Department of Health or by the Secretary of State. I seek clarification on those points.

As the Minister is aware, Laura is four years old. She was born with a perished bowel and her childhood so far has been marked by pain and discomfort and the restrictions resulting from the need to be fed intravenously.

Throughout her short life Laura has had the tremendous support of a loving family and many friends. She has also received excellent treatment at the Royal Manchester children's hospital in Pendelbury in my constituency. I pay tribute to the care and dedication of the staff at the hospital and, in particular, to Laura's consultant, Mr. Adrian Bianchi. That medical care was available through the national health service and it was the best care so far that money could buy for a child in Laura's position, but of course free to her under the NHS.

It being half past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Miss Lestor: Last October, Laura became so ill that she had to be ventilated on a machine for two months. She recovered, but soon fell ill again. As a result, she now has severe liver damage. It was agreed that Laura was in urgent need of a life-saving operation to rebuild her bowel and to replace her liver. *[Interruption.]* I wish that the Minister would listen. Many people are interested in this case and the Minister should concentrate on what I have to say.

What happened next was a nightmare that no parent should ever have to live through, with delay following confusion. It is the experience of that family—an experience that I have reason to believe is shared or could be shared by other families—which I want to bring to the attention of the House. I hope that the Minister will be able to give straight answers to my questions and clarify the position so that others who find themselves in a similar situation will not have to suffer the private and now very public agonies of the Davies family.

Mr. and Mrs. Davies were told that the sophisticated operation that Laura needed was not available in this country. They then discovered, almost by chance it seems, that surgeons at the university of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania had experience in that area and might be prepared to undertake the operation on Laura. However, there was of course a price tag—£350,000. The desperate race was on to raise the money because we were told that it was not available under the NHS.

What was the Department of Health's response to that appeal for funds? It would appear that there is no financial provision within current Health Department statutes to fund operations outside this country or the European Community. Is it true, as I understand it to be, that if the Department feels that there is a strong case to be made, it can apply to the Treasury for special additional funding? I should be grateful if the Minister would confirm that that is the case and, if so, explain why the decision to apply for special funding was not made in this specific instance.

Salford health authority decided that it had to respond to the Davies appeal for financial help. There was no money in its regional reserve, but officers decided that they would pledge about £7,000, the equivalent of 1 per cent. of their total budget for medical treatment within the EEC. In addition, they agreed to help set up a special bank account on behalf of the charitable appeal.

The response of my constituents in Eccles was incredible. I am sure that many of my colleagues will also have direct experience of similar fund-raising activities. From school children to firemen, from pensioners to bank clerks, it seems that every section of the Eccles community was rallying around to fill the gap left by the health service.

The *Manchester Evening News* devoted page after page to the campaign and the struggle of Mr. and Mrs. Davies was subsequently highlighted on national television and money came in from all parts of the country. A petition was circulated and presented to me regarding the situation of funding by the NHS. To date, £200,000 has been raised —a magnificent achievement marred only by a cruel hoaxer who contacted fundraisers last week to offer £250,000 towards the operation. Imagine the hopes raised by such an apparently generous offer, only to be dashed when it came out that it was a hoax. Whoever that person is, I want that person to know that he is despised by the entire country.

This week we received the wonderful news that King Fahd of Saudi Arabia had guaranteed to fund the balance of the money needed to send Laura to Pittsburgh. I take this opportunity formally to thank King Fahd on behalf of the Davies family and all my constituents and their supporters for that magnificent gesture.

However, while all that activity was going on Laura's health was rapidly deteriorating. Fund raising, particularly of the magnitude in this case, takes time, although we have done remarkably well. I am afraid that time is something which little Laura does not have on her side. She is now very ill and it is unlikely that she will be able to cope with the stress of a transatlantic flight.

What were the Government doing while the fund raising was going on? I wrote to the Secretary of State twice, on 22 April and again on 6 May. I received a formal reply yesterday after protesting that I had not received a reply. In the meantime, I accompanied Mr. Davies last week to a meeting initiated by him with the Chief Medical Officer at Richmond house. I am trying to be fair. I do not want to make political capital out of the case. Prior to writing to me the Secretary of State said that she was willing to see Mr. Davies and me later if we felt that it would be useful for us all to meet. But my contact during those three weeks with the Department to find out its position on funding was disappointing to say the least.

When we met the Chief Medical Officer last week he revealed at this late stage that a leading British surgeon Professor Sir Roy Calne at Addenbrookes hospital in Cambridge was prepared to give the Davies a second opinion. Laura has now been seen by Sir Roy and her parents will decide on Monday whether they will give their permission for him to carry out pioneering surgery on their daughter—I understand that he is willing to do so.

We are now waiting for Laura's parents to make that difficult decision. Do they go to Pittsburgh or have the operation done in Britain? Of course, we have to wait for a liver to be available for the transplant.

The case raises some important points of principle and the need for clarification of NHS funding practice in similar cases—where an operation cannot be performed here but expertise exists abroad. I have no wish to raise false hopes anywhere, but if patients and their families are forced to go private, as it were, in such circumstances does not the NHS have a responsibility to make available information, first, about experts within the United Kingdom and, secondly, about surgeons and teams elsewhere?

The offer by Sir Roy Calne at Addenbrookes came late in the day, after discussions had taken place and everyone had been informed that no way could the operation be performed in Britain. Perhaps the Minister could enlighten the House about the procedure for keeping up-to-date information about pioneers in surgery both within the United Kingdom and throughout the rest of the world. I do not doubt for one moment that the original information that the operation could not be performed here was accurate to the best of anyone's knowledge. I find it difficult, as we all do, to understand how it was that last week, several weeks after the Davies had been told that the child's only chance was to go to Pittsburgh, Sir Roy was contacted and the Department of Health said on the very day that we met it last week that Sir Roy was prepared to see Laura that day in Cambridge to assess her, do some tests and make his decision.

The need to update information and know what pioneering surgery is available is crucial. I should also like guidance, as we all would, on who pays for such costly operations if the patient is treated under the national health service but has to go to a different health authority region from his or her own. In many cases we are talking about highly specialised operations. Costs are enormous and the patient has no choice.

In Laura's case, if her parents decide to take up the Addenbrookes offer, what proportion of the cost will be borne by Salford health authority, what proportion by Cambridge health authority and what will come from other NHS funds?

Occasionally in the past, patients in dependent territories, in need of life-saving operations that are unavailable in their countries, have been treated at our expense elsewhere. Is that still the case? If so, there is something of a precedent in this case.

I should also like guidance on the financial provisions available in cases such as Laura's, where it is thought that post-operative treatment must be carried out in another country, outside the European Community. Will the NHS contribute to the costs incurred?

As we can all now understand, Laura's case raises important questions, which have wider implications. I know that the thoughts of all in the House and beyond go to Laura and her parents at this difficult time. Wherever it is decided that Laura should have the operation, either in this country on the NHS—in which case, there are questions about finance as I mentioned—or in Pittsburgh, we are thinking of her and we understand the agonies of her family in having to make this difficult decision at a crucial time for Laura.

I hope that by opening up the debate we may prevent others from experiencing the emotional and physical suffering endured by the Davies family and their friends, and we may get some clarification of the financial responsibilities of the Department and the health authority.

I heard today that if Laura has the operation in this country some of the experts from Pittsburgh are prepared to assist in the operation. Obviously, we are enormously grateful that that is so, but we would like to know who will pay. Will it come from the money that has been raised? Will the NHS cover it? Or are they giving their expertise free? Those are important questions for Laura and for other people.

As knowledge of medical science and surgery progresses in some countries more quickly than in others, similar problems will arise. They have arisen in the past. For that reason, I hope that the Minister will be able to take up the matters of principle that I have raised and answer my questions on financing, so that we have a clearer picture of where we stand when dealing with similar cases.

2.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health said last week on the Floor of the House, this is not the place to discuss individual cases because of the intrusion in the personal difficulties of the families. None the less, since the case has been the subject of detailed media coverage I am grateful to be able to explain the position over the predicament in which Laura Davis and her parents find themselves.

I refute any suggestion that the reasons why Laura is not being sent to America as an NHS patient stem from a lack of resources available to the NHS.

Laura was born with a rare disorder which means that part of her alimentary tract is missing. She has had a number of major operations in this country on the NHS since birth and has had to be fed intravenously for 12 hours per day. In the past six months severe liver problems have set in. The paediatric surgeon in charge of Laura's case in Manchester considered the possibility that a double transplant operation of liver and small bowel would benefit her.

The double transplant operation is experimental and is not yet routinely available in the United Kingdom, although consideration has been given to setting up such a transplant programme in this country. That there is not such a programme reflects the experimental nature of the procedure. Liver and small bowel transplants have been performed with a degree of success at two centres in North America, notably at the university of Pittsburg. I understand that the university unit there has undertaken 19 such operations during the past two years. Ten of those operations have been on children, though it is too early to judge the level of long-term benefit.

This is not the place to debate matters that are proper for the family and clinicians responsible. However, I must make it clear that these circumstances, in conjunction with the current state of medical development of this particular form of transplant, cannot, I regret, allow the assumption that a certain cure is readily available in Pittsburg. The evidence is that this treatment is not by any means yet widely acceptable to the medical profession internationally. It is an experimental procedure which is being evaluated by a research project. It is not generally

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

available even to Americans who might benefit. It is extremely important to realise, too, that, even at its most successful, there is as yet no evidence that it will permit what would be generally recognised as a normal life. Very long periods—up to a year—are required in hospital, with lengthy periods on a ventilator or in intensive care. Because of the extensive aftercare and various information from the United States, it appears likely that media reports of the costs involved are a significant underestimate.

It is not for the Department or this House to take decisions of a clinical nature. The Department of Health is of course responsible for ensuring the appropriate development of services, which health authorities are then responsible for providing. The NHS provides a comprehensive service which includes all established and accepted treatments. In the field of transplantation the NHS has an excellent record.

I should like to outline more specifically the actions of the Department with regard to liver and small bowel transplantation. Officials have kept the developments under constant review. The matter was discussed in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's advisory group on supra-regional services last year. There has been close liaison between clinicians in this field and doctors in the Department of Health. In addition, the Chief Medical Officer is convening a small group of experts to consider future developments.

To return to Laura's case, I must re-emphasise that treatment decisions are a matter for clinical judgment. Laura's parents and supporters, through the hon. Lady, have asked that public money be used to pay, either in whole or in part, for treatment in the USA. As this raises the whole principle of sending NHS patients abroad for treatment it may be helpful if I spell out what the law is on the referral of patients overseas and answer one of the hon. Lady's questions.

The basic position is that there is no general power in NHS legislation to use public funds for treatment overseas. Apart from a European exception, not relevant to this case, the relevant United Kingdom legislation, section 5(2) of the National Health Service Act 1977, clearly restricts the expenditure of public funds to treatment available in this country. Neither I nor the hon. Lady wants to make political capital from this, but I must mention that that legislation was introduced under the Labour Government. That underlines the consensus that has traditionally been in place over this issue of purchasing treatment overseas. Governments of both parties, rightly, have taken the view that what is best for the British people, and, indeed, what the British people want, is for health services to be developed and made available within this country. We should not as a matter of public policy rely on sending patients abroad at great expense, with the associated risk to the patient through lengthy journeys and separation from support from friends and family.

On very rare occasions—twice in the past three years—the Department of Health has sought authority to spend relatively small amounts on an extra-statutory basis to purchase treatments overseas outside the EC, usually in the USA. Such authority would normally be given only when the treatment in question involved a life-threatening condition, was not available in the United Kingdom, produced a strong probability of survival and was well-established rather than experimental. Not all of these conditions apply to liver and small bowel transplants.

As the hon. Lady knows, in concluding that it would not be appropriate to refer Laura to the United States of America, Ministers asked the Chief Medical Officer to advise on what treatment options are available in this country. It became clear that the necessary expertise was available here, and why Laura was not referred at any time by her consultant to Sir Roy Calne is a matter which should be considered further. She was assessed by Sir Roy, who is an eminent surgeon of world standing in transplantion. He has now confirmed that he is willing to carry out the necessary operation, if that is the wish of Laura's parents. Moreover, the surgeon in charge of the unit at Pittsburgh, Dr. Thomas Starzl, has made it clear publicly that he believes that the operation should be done here, rather than in the United States. He has pointed out that if Laura went to Pittsburgh, she would be competing with a number of other children waiting for suitable organs—quite apart from travel considerations.

Dr. Starzl went on to say:

"the procedures we are talking about have their origins in Cambridge with Sir Roy Calne. They represent a kind of transatlantic and bilateral cooperative venture that has gone on for many years between that group and ours. What we have done belongs really to them just as much as it belongs to us."

In addition, I am very pleased to be able to confirm that should Laura's parents decide to accept Sir Roy Calne's offer to operate, Dr. Tzakis, a senior member of Dr. Starzl's team, has agreed to come here to assist in Laura's treatment—whether the operation or post-operative treatment. The hon. Lady asked who would pay for such a visit. If Dr. Tzakis wishes to charge the NHS, that will be taken care of by public funds.

In conclusion, I should like to acknowledge the efforts made in Laura's case by Sir Roy Calne in Cambridge, Dr. Starzl and his team in Pittsburgh and the Government's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Kenneth Calman. But, most of all, I am sure that I speak for the whole House in sending best wishes to Laura and her family at this difficult and distressing time.

I understand that arrangements have been made for Laura to return home and she may be leaving Addenbrooke's shortly, during which time I hope that her parents will come to a decision. I very much hope that a solution will be found to this distressing situation.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eight minutes to Three o'clock, pursuant to the Resolution [19 May].

House of Commons

Tuesday 2 June 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Departmental Relocation

1. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on relocating his Department's resources and personnel between different regions of the United Kingdom.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): In line with Government policy, the Ministry of Defence aims to locate its work wherever best value for money can be obtained, taking account of the operational requirements of the Department.

Mr. Devlin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, wherever possible, the Department should seek to locate jobs in areas of higher unemployment, where the jobs and skills base of the local community need bolstering? As his Department failed in the previous Parliament to deliver the quality assurance unit to my constituency, why is he now seeking to move 170 jobs from my constituency to Bath?

Mr. Hamilton: The proposal to move 180 jobs from the naval stores depot at Eaglescliffe is not a decision; it is merely a proposal which we are considering on the basis that the support side of the Navy should be located in the Bath region. I apologise once again to my hon. Friend in relation to the quality assurance unit, which we certainly intended to move to Stockton. However, we decided later that it was possible to absorb its functions into the Defence Research Agency.

Mr. Frank Cook: The Minister may be pleased to learn that although his apology is welcome and polite, it is small consolation to the people of Cleveland, who were disappointed by the previous decision. It is good news that the decision is yet to be made. In reaching a conclusion, will the Minister take account of the fact that it has proved difficult—at least, it is reported to have been so—in the south-west to recruit people of adequate calibre to fill vacancies, whereas it is exceedingly easy in the north-east? There are many considerations other than a pure statement of account. Will the Minister give an assurance that all those factors will be considered fully?

Mr. Hamilton: I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks. We take all such factors into account before reaching a conclusion. I shall have to be persuaded that recruitment, among other things, is an assumption that holds up before we transfer these jobs from Stockton.

Western European Union

2. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans to meet the Secretary General of the Western European Union to discuss future European security arrangements.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I shall meet Dr. Van Eekelen at the Western European Union Council of Ministers meeting on 19 June, but I hope to see him in London before then.

Mr. Taylor: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give clear evidence that progress is being made within the WEU on its strategic thinking about how to react to the increasing dangers outside the traditional territory of NATO, given that it is rethinking its strategy and given the rather worrying and puzzling aspect of the Franco-German brigade? We need strong WEU thinking on this.

Mr. Rifkind: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. A clear decision was reached at the end of the Rome summit that the WEU should be the European arm of the NATO alliance. My hon. Friend referred to the proposed Franco-German corps—to which, as an example of Franco-German co-operation, we do not object. However, a number of questions are still to be answered about the relationship of the corps to NATO and we would regret any weakening in the commitment of those countries to the alliance.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the effectiveness of European security arrangements will depend not only on institutions such as the WEU but on the adoption of common policies in areas such as procurement? Does he share the concern of many hon. Members at the announcement again today of the possible withdrawal of Germany from the European fighter aircraft programme? Would not such a withdrawal have considerable implications for European security arrangements?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I share that concern unreservedly. Over the years, Germany has been an extremely reliable European partner and I am happy to pay tribute to that. However, the European fighter aircraft is perhaps the most important example at present of European collaboration. The United Kingdom, Spain and Italy are very keen to go ahead with the project. We very much hope that the German Government, who have not yet reached a decision, will confirm their willingness to be associated with the project, as it will be difficult to take seriously protestations about the need for European co-operation and collaboration if such an important project is endangered.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: While accepting my right hon. and learned Friend's assertion that the Germans have been reliable partners in defence, many of my constituents believe that the Germans have had their defence on the cheap. They will be extremely angry if the Germans renege

on their participation in the European fighter aircraft project, thus depriving many people in my part of the world of their jobs.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the important employment implications in this country. There are similar implications in Germany; my hon. Friend may have noticed the strong representations supporting the EFA project from the coalition partners of the German Government and the similar views expressed by hon. Members of all parties.

Mr. O'Neill: I welcome the Secretary of State's continuing commitment to EFA. Does he agree that replacements have still to be found for the Phantom and Jaguar aircraft, not only in our own Air Force, but in others in Europe and the rest of the world? Does he agree that there must therefore still be possibilities for additional orders and sales? If the Germans backed out, the contract could still continue with the continued participation of Italy and Spain. Will the Secretary of State also bear it in mind that the present figures were arrived at in 1986 on the basis of the threat assessment then and may not be figures to which we should be committed in terms of the EFA numbers that we should want in future?

Mr. Rifkind: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's interest in defence sales, which has not always been apparent on the Opposition Back Benches. We have been working on a planning assumption of 250 European fighter aircraft. That assumption would be concluded only at the appropriate time. We do not need to reach a conclusion on the precise numbers for some time, so it is appropriate at this stage simply to give our unqualified commitment to the project. I have no doubt that a substantial number of aircraft will be required; the precise number can be decided at the appropriate time.

Army Restructuring

3. **Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reconsideration, if any, he has given to the pace of the restructuring of the Army in the light of developments in the former federation of Yugoslavia and other international areas of unrest.

Mr. Rifkind: Changes in the international security environment and the need to provide forces relevant to the challenges of the mid-1990s and beyond were taken into account in the Government's decisions on the restructuring of the armed forces.

Mr. Ancram: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, in the light of the horrific events in Bosnia and Croatia and of the increasing tensions in former parts of the Soviet Union, the security considerations and the potential peacekeeping responsibilities facing this country have changed dramatically since the restructuring was first proposed? Will he now reconsider the pace and extent of that restructuring in the light of the uncertainty in the international scenario? Does he agree that the lesson of history is that it is always easier to disarm than to rearm?

Mr. Rifkind: We are already committed to a peacekeeping presence in Croatia. An advance party is already in that country and the remainder of the field medical unit is due to go out shortly. With regard to any future commitments on peacekeeping, we should always take into account whether there is a genuine peacekeeping contribution to be made. I always make a distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcing; that is a very important distinction which should always be borne in mind when such issues are raised.

Mr. Rogers: I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that the Opposition have been asking for some years for the Department to carry out a full-scale defence review. In view of the substantial changes taking place in Europe and the world, there is obviously a need for such a review. Will the Secretary of State give an undertaking to the House today that he will instigate such a review so that we can match our resources to our present and potential commitments and not simply respond, as we do at present, to Treasury demands for cuts?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question. My predecessor and his colleagues gave deep consideration to the likely demands on our armed forces in the years to come. Of course we continue to monitor the international situation. It is always appropriate in this country and in any other country continually to assess the demands likely to be made on our armed forces over the years and to ensure that our armed forces are of a scale and quality able to respond to those challenges.

Eltham Palace

4. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when and how decisions will be made on the future of Eltham palace.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A study examining the implications of moving the headquarters of the director of educational and training services (Army), including the Service Children's Education Authority, to Worthy Down is nearing completion. No decision will be taken before we have consulted all concerned, including the trade unions.

Mr. Bottomley: Will my right hon. Friend accept that my suggestion that a deputation should meet him or his colleagues because the future of Eltham palace, with its historic setting and great hall, should continue to be linked to education, whether or not with a military connection? That is a matter of great concern locally, although it may not be the biggest issue facing the military services at the moment.

Mr. Hamilton: I should be delighted to receive a delegation from my hon. Friend and to discuss the future of Eltham palace with him. We are having discussions at the moment with the Crown Estate Commissioners, the freeholders of Eltham palace, about how Eltham palace might be handed back.

"Options for Change"

5. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implementation of the programme "Options for Change" for the armed forces.

Mr. Rifkind: "Options for Change" is a necessary reform which has its parallels in all NATO countries as well as in those of the former Warsaw pact. A number of

announcements have already been made about the implementation of our proposals; I will continue to keep the House fully informed of progress.

Mr. Viggers: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply. Does he recall that when the Select Committee on Defence examined the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1991 it considered a range of defence procurement projects and concluded that if all the projects were to go ahead, that would lead to what the Select Committee called "a strikingly well-equipped Army"? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that procurement is now going ahead, confirming the Government's claim that although the armed forces will be smaller, they will be more flexible and better equipped? Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept—this concerns many people in my constituency who are armed forces personnel—that the armed forces continue to provide an excellent career opportunity?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. The Select Committee referred to the fact that the Army should have available to it proper equipment of a high quality and it mentioned the Challenger tanks for the Royal Armoured Corps, armoured personnel carriers and other forms of equipment, all of which are at various stages of implementation. I warmly endorse my hon. Friend's final comment that a career in the armed forces still offers superb opportunities and can be a source of considerable fulfilment for the men and women coming forward to serve in the forces now.

Sir David Steel: A few moments ago the Secretary of State drew a proper distinction between peacekeeping forces and peace enforcing forces. Is he aware that hon. Members are concerned about the lack of capacity under the "Options for Change" scheme to engage in future peace enforcement activities, which is a crucial role for this country as a permanent member of the Security Council?

Mr. Rifkind: I hear the right hon. Gentleman's point. I remind him that at present there are 1,200 British forces involved in various United Nations peacekeeping forces in Croatia and Cyprus; they will also be in Cambodia and several other countries. I think that we have demonstrated our commitment to the United Nations and our ability to respond to reasonable requests from that body.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many of us who supported the "Options for Change" decision in the last Parliament, although we were well aware that we were cutting very close to the bone, would not be prepared to back any further cuts that might be suggested by the Treasury? Does my right hon. and learned Friend realise that he has considerable support on the Conservative Benches for a bit of early firing in that direction?

Mr. Rifkind: I am naturally delighted to hear what my hon. Friend says. I accept his remarks both in the spirit and in the letter.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the Secretary of State's assurance that he will keep us informed of changes. When will he make a statement about the reorganisation of the medical reserves in the Territorial Army, bearing in mind the need to keep a strong medical team in the light of our experiences in the Gulf preparation and in the ensuring conflict?

Mr. Rifkind: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a date at present, but perhaps I may keep him fully informed as soon as that information is available.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there is continuing widespread concern at the cuts in the infantry? Will he look again at that? Does he appreciate that the concern would be considerably reduced in Staffordshire if he reprieved the Staffordshire regiment?

Mr. Rifkind: I am, of course, aware that concern has been expressed in a number of different quarters. I acknowledge that it is very important to ensure that future force levels will be adequate to the tasks that we ask the services to undertake. I intend to keep that requirement firmly in mind.

Sport

7. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any proposals to amend the list of sporting activities recognised within the armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no plans at present to alter the list of sports which are officially recognised. The range of sports which enjoy official recognition is, however, kept under review to ensure that it reflects demand originating from grass roots level within the services.

Mr. Hinchliffe: The Minister will recall meeting an all party delegation in March about the recognition of rugby league in the armed forces. What steps were taken to communicate the outcome of that meeting to the heads of establishments and units within the armed forces? Why, at certain RAF stations, were station orders posted indicating that personnel should not have contact with the rugby league's national development officer? Why were personnel at RAF Marham, who were organising a rugby league competition next Saturday, refused permission to use the pitches at that base? That seems to be completely against the spirit of what was agreed at the meeting in March.

Mr. Hamilton: As I assured the hon. Gentleman at the meeting, we were happy to give him all possible facilities in terms of publicity material which would be circulated within the three armed services. I have no idea why facilities should have been debarred or such notices put up: it is totally against the spirit of the undertaking that I gave the hon. Gentleman at our meeting, and I will investigate both events.

Surplus Land

8. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his proposals for the return to public use of surplus Ministry of Defence land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The rationalisation of our land holdings and the early disposal of surplus property remains a high priority.

Mr. Hughes: Given that in 1985 Ministry of Defence policy was confirmed as being to acquire an extra 50,000 acres of land for training purposes, and given that on 11 February the National Audit Office said that the proposals were unjustified in terms of supporting evidence and that

they would use more land than was needed, will the Government now agree to an independent external review of Ministry of Defence land holdings so that we can ensure that it has the right land in the right place, and that it uses it properly and fully, and no more?

Mr. Hamilton: I do not think that an external audit is necessary. We are trying to make sure that the training areas that we have are suitable for the weapons systems and the type of training that we are trying to do. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the range of many of our weapons systems gets longer all the time, so we need bigger training areas. As the hon. Gentleman will also know, we are bringing back some troops and weapons systems from Germany, which will also change our demand and need for training areas. We constantly review the number of training areas that we have and we dispose of unwanted land whenever we possibly can. The hon. Gentleman will know that we disposed of £102 million of surplus property last year and £86 million the year before. We are hoping to repeat a £100 million disposal this year.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Should my right hon. and learned Friend be considering proposals to buy yet more land north of Bristol to build yet another MOD facility when we have excellent and underused facilities at Portland which could accommodate all the necessary staff? Will my right hon. and learned Friend instruct the MOD to stop looking at new sites and use the sites that we already have?

Mr. Hamilton: I can certainly give my hon. Friend the undertaking that he needs. We seriously consider our own land holdings. Only with the greatest reluctance would we purchase new land to put up new office blocks and so forth. Obviously, we prefer to use the land that we already have.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Minister recall that a few years ago the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) went to Molesworth common in a flak jacket and with more troops than stormed Goose green in the Falklands war to turn off a dozen peace people who were growing crops? Would it not be a good idea for the Ministry of Defence to put Molesworth and Greenham common to use for growing food? It should get rid of the land entirely. It is no longer necessary. It should give the food to the starving people of the world. That would also be a good principle to apply to the expenditure on Trident. We should cancel Trident and use the money for the national health service and the starving people of the world.

Mr. Hamilton: If the hon. Gentleman is such a good friend of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, perhaps he would like to go down to Greenham common and remind the women down there that the missiles have left and no one can understand why they are still sitting there making a filthy mess of the area.

Mr. John Greenway: Is there not already plenty of public access to much land already owned by the Ministry of Defence? Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that as the need for such land perhaps reduces in the years to come there will be proper consultation with local authorities and the countryside agencies about the continuing amenity value of the land to the public and its value for nature conservation?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, indeed. We issued a pamphlet recently at a press conference given by Lord Cranborne. It was pointed out that we give access to most of our training areas. There are footpaths where people can walk and when ranges are not being used for live firing they are available to the public. We are considering ways of making our ranges increasingly available to the public when we are not using them.

NATO

9. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet other NATO Defence Ministers to discuss NATO defence policy.

Mr. Rifkind: I met my NATO colleagues last week at meetings of the Eurogroup, the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group in Brussels. We discussed a range of current alliance business and reaffirmed NATO's fundamental importance to the security of Europe. Copies of the communiqués issued following the meetings have been placed in the Library.

Mr. McAllion: With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact, is it not time to reassess with our NATO allies our strategic defence policies, including a full review of our so-called independent nuclear deterrent? Should not that review begin by calling into question the relevance of keeping one Polaris at sea at all times when, according to press reports today, safety problems caused by that policy are endangering the lives of submariners and the public by increasing the likelihood of a nuclear accident?

Mr. Rifkind: The reports to which the hon. Gentleman refers have already been repudiated as baseless. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that no submarine goes to sea unless all safety requirements have been fully complied with. On the general strategic situation, the hon. Gentleman must be aware not only that Russia remains a major nuclear super-power but that massive reductions in the nuclear potential of both the alliance and the former Soviet Union are already taking place. The United Kingdom has indicated its intention to withdraw certain tactical and other nuclear missiles as a contribution towards that welcome process.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure at his next meeting with his counterparts in other NATO countries that the naval forces of the alliance will be available if necessary to enforce the United Nations blockade imposed against Serbia? It must be made effective. Could those naval forces also be a deterrent against the indiscriminate use of force by the Yugoslav navy against helpless civilians in Dubrovnik and other Croatian towns?

Mr. Rifkind: The decisions taken so far have been to impose economic sanctions against the Yugoslav republic. No decision has been taken by the United Nations in favour of a naval blockade. If any proposal is made, we shall have to consider it, but there is no such proposal before the international community at present.

Dr. Godman: Is not it inevitable that Europe—through the Western European Union rather than NATO—will have to take a much greater responsibility for its security and defence? Is not it also likely that future American presidents will come under enormous pressure from the United States Congress and the American people to reduce

their commitment to the defence of Europe? When will the Government face up to the realities surrounding the security and defence of Europe?

Mr. Rifkind: There might be pressures of the kind to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but I remind him that the Atlantic alliance has been uniquely successful in ensuring the peace of Europe for the past 40 to 50 years. I and the Government believe that the alliance has a continuing relevance to the well-being of Europe. It is interesting that the newer, emerging democracies in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary emphasise the desirability of NATO continuing, and that that is also the view of the majority of people in the United States.

Sir Michael Marshall: Would my right hon. and learned Friend care to expand the answer that he has just given by rejecting what the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has just urged him to do? Surely, when one considers Yugoslavia or the world scene at present, the link with NATO, within the United Nations, is likely to be the more fruitful in dealing with many worldwide problems. We must all play our part. Does he agree that the idea of Franco-German or other European initiatives is premature and ineffective?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. The NATO alliance represents an area of stability in a continent which has unfortunately become turbulent, and it is appropriate for us to consider—as is being done within NATO—whether NATO can make additional contributions towards peacekeeping or other requirements. Those matters still have to be discussed and conclusions have to be reached. However, I am sure that NATO continues to have an enormous contribution to make to the security and well-being of the countries that make up the alliance and of Europe.

Infantry

10. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be in a position to respond to the Select Committee on Defence's proposals on the size of the infantry in "Options for Change".

Mr. Rifkind: I expect to be in a position to respond shortly to the Defence Select Committee's third report.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Secretary of State recall that, at the time of the Kincardine and Deeside by-election, he wrote a letter expressing his hope at that stage that some of the proposed amalgamations for the Scottish regiments could be reconsidered? Having regard to the situation that obtains in Yugoslavia and to the extra demands that may be made on our infantry, and to the intolerable pressure on service families in some regiments facing amalgamation, would the Secretary of State respond as early as possible? Will he make his response positive and reprieve, or bring back, at least some of the regiments facing amalgamation?

Mr. Rifkind: I have said that it is important to ensure that the needs of the armed forces are fully met and that we do not impose on them any requirements to which they cannot properly respond. It is therefore important to use those criteria to determine the imposition of "Options for Change" during the next two years. Parallels can be found throughout the western world which show that substantial savings can be made on defence and they are appropriate at the present time.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear it in mind that it is better to take time and to view the matter coolly and properly, rather than to make hasty decisions? Most defence decisions are made in the light of events and in many areas of the world, those events are not under our control. Yet, as history has shown, we are often required to send Scottish regiments to trouble spots around the world.

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. Friend said, it is certainly the case that our armed forces have often been called on to meet obligations in other parts of the world. About 1,200 British forces are in peace-keeping roles in other countries, and we have 13 United Kingdom dependent territories, many of which require a military presence to ensure their security. All those factors have to be taken into account when determining what the force levels in the armed forces should be in the years to come.

Dr. Reid: May I take this first opportunity to congratulate the Secretary of State on his appointment? Is not the fact that he holds that office, and that the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) has demitted office, a sign and a tacit admission that the Government got their sums wrong over "Options for Change"? Will he now answer the question put to him—does he stand by the views that he expressed in his letter during the Kincardine and Deeside by-election about the possible overstretch of the infantry? Will he give us, in plain words, a guarantee that that decision will be re-examined, as urged by every section of the House, including the Select Committee on Defence, apart from his predecessor?

Mr. Rifkind: May I first pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), the former Secretary of State for Defence, for the courage with which he proposed "Options for Change"? Throughout that time he showed a determination worthy of our admiration. With regard to the issues to which the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) referred, I emphasise that I attach considerable importance to ensuring that force levels are appropriate to the demands expected of our armed forces. If the Government ever came to the view that force levels needed to be reviewed that is what they would do. Those are the criteria to apply.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that real and informed concern is being expressed within military and civilian circles about the future size of the infantry, bearing in mind our responsibilities, not least in Northern Ireland? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that overstretch is a serious problem? Will he consider the report by the Select Committee on Defence? Will he consider, once again, the excellent case for the retention, as a single county regiment, of the Cheshire regiment, which is well recruited and well retained?

Mr. Rifkind: I note what my hon. Friend says. To put the position completely in the round, my hon. Friend is aware that there are proposals not only to reduce the number of battalions in the armed forces but to reduce greatly their commitments because of the rundown of our forces on the continent and, ultimately, the withdrawal of

certain battalions from Hong Kong. Those factors must be borne in mind when deciding what the appropriate level of our forces should be.

Secrecy Classification

11. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what level of secrecy classification he is willing to disclose documents to hon. Members.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): Hon. Members may be allowed access to information at various levels of classification depending on the circumstances. Classified information is also made available in accordance with the published rules to members of Select Committees.

Mr. Jones: I think that I heard the Minister's reply that, sometimes, restricted documents would be available. May I remind the Minister that, last year, I asked the Secretary of State for the criteria applied to the construction of safe ranges? That information was refused me as it is in a classified document. I was then sent it anonymously—*[Interruption.]* Does the Minister agree that it is ludicrous for the information on the safety criteria for ranges to be classified in any way and that it is even more ludicrous for hon. Members to be refused access to that information? Is it not even more ludicrous—*[Interruption.]* Is it not even more ludicrous that I was able to obtain a copy of that document not from some foreign agency, but from a constituent of mine? Does he not——

Madam Speaker: Order. This is Question Time. It is not a debate and the hon. Member has asked quite enough questions.

Mr. Aitken: There is no ministerial responsibility for anonymous letters.

Mr. Dickens: Am I not right in saying that the key element in the defence of the realm is surprise and that there is a great difference between betraying classified information to a potential enemy and the citizens charter, which gives people their rights? We must be careful in the information that we make available.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend has made his point in his usual robust way. He is right to point out that there is a difference between classified information and the information covered by the citizens charter, which is simply information already in the public domain, but which needs greater and wider amplification.

Trident

12. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will be placing an order for the fourth Trident.

15. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to place an order for the fourth Trident.

Mr. Aitken: We intend to place the order for the fourth Vanguard class submarine as soon as contract negotiations with Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited have been satisfactorily concluded.

Mr. Raynsford: What is the Minister's latest estimate of the total cost of the Trident programme, including inevitable future costs such as decommissioning? How do those costs compare with original estimates for the programme and what value-for-money criteria are applied to that element of Government expenditure?

Mr. Aitken: I am pleased to tell the hon. Gentleman that Trident remains on time and within budget. The total procurement cost is £10·5 billion, which is £2·9 billion less than the original cost estimate, a point which was well praised by the Select Committee on Defence which said that it was pleased by the

"gratifying and unusual spectacle of a major defence procurement programme coming in far below estimate."

I hope that the hon. Gentleman is pleased with that good news. I can tell him, in answer to his questions about other costs, that the general operating costs of Trident are expected to be similar in percentage terms to those of the Polaris programme—that is, something below 2 per cent. of the overall defence budget.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: Is the Minister aware that that cost is more than double even the amount of public money that the Conservatives have put into the failed docklands development? Will he consider including the whole Trident programme in the arms reduction talks with the Americans and Russians when the new round of talks start, enabling the programme to be decommissioned and the money put into social and economic programmes that better serve inner-city residents? Or is he considering putting 6,000 civil servants on the first Trident submarine to be commissioned?

Mr. Aitken: That would make the Trident submarine rather overcrowded. I do not think that we could accept the hon. Lady's suggestion under any possible terms. Trident is a minimum deterrent system. That view was endorsed by President Yeltsin during his recent visit to Britain. We do not believe that we can make compromises with Britain's essential security requirements.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the importance to the north-west region of the Trident project and of the European fighter project and make sure that both go ahead?

Mr. Aitken: I agree with my hon. Friend that the employment dimension of those programmes is of considerable significance. The United Kingdom Trident programme will provide, at its peak, 14,500 direct and 11,500 indirect jobs in this country. I am glad that my hon. Friend's constituency is benefiting from those arrangements.

Mrs. Gorman: Is my hon. Friend aware that some Opposition Members, including, I believe, the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), think that we should order these splendid vessels but not put missiles on them? Would that not be equivalent to ordering a Rolls-Royce and neglecting to put in a chauffeur?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is right to point out that during the election campaign statements were made by members of the various wings and splinter groups of the Labour party which would have made a complete Alice in Wonderland situation of any defence policy.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Minister explain why the country can be defended with a minimum deterrent of three Polaris boats now but will require four Trident boats in the year 2000?

Mr. Aitken: I can answer that question easily. The country is defended over only a short period by three Polaris boats. All informed naval opinion is agreed that if we are to have a safe and secure nuclear deterrent, with submarines on patrol at all times, it is necessary for us to have a four-boat operation.

Mr. Brazier: I offer a belated welcome to my hon. Friend on his new position. It is overdue promotion. If poachers make the best gamekeepers, I am certain that our secrets and Trident submarines will be very safe indeed. Will he confirm that intelligence reports show that more and more third-world countries are acquiring nuclear weapons, and that while a Conservative Government are in office, there will be no question of our forgoing our minimal nuclear deterrent, the Trident programme?

Mr. Aitken: It appears to be a matter of published record that some unfriendly countries are acquiring the old hardware of the former Soviet Union. That does indeed make for a dangerous and unstable situation. So this is not the moment for Britain to be in any way relaxing its guard, with its independent nuclear deterrent the ultimate safeguard of our national security.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary

13. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present number of Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels in commission.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Royal Fleet Auxiliary currently has 22 vessels in commission; 11 tankers, four replenishment ships, five landing ships logistic, a helicopter support ship and a forward repair ship.

Mr. Loyden: Is it not a disgrace that, during the Gulf war, out of the more than 100 ships that were commissioned, only four or five were British owned and flagged? When will the Government recognise that they must support the British merchant fleet so that, when vessels are needed they are available, rather than the Government having to use foreign-flagged and registered ships? When will they wake up to the fact that the British merchant fleet must be stimulated so that the ships are there when needed?

Mr. Hamilton: During the Gulf war, most of the British ships that we might have chartered were occupied doing other things and were not available for charter, so we chartered on the open market and satisfactorily proved that we could get supplies to the Gulf during the war without needing British ships. We keep the British register under careful review and would be concerned if the numbers of merchant ships were declining too fast. The situation is not yet drastic.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Ms. Primarolo: Does the Prime Minister recall that on 6 May he told the House that he wanted to sign the global convention on biodiversity at Rio? Does he agree that it would be indefensible for any major power to refuse to sign a treaty that halts the mass destruction of species by human intervention?

The Prime Minister: We are working hard to make sure that we shall be in a position to sign the convention. As the hon. Lady knows, this country leads the world in scientific expertise on biodiversity, not least at Kew, and we play an important international role in attempts to achieve a convention that can be signed generally. A number of countries have financial concerns about the convention, and the particular concern, which I hope we shall be able to overcome, is that the financial articles imply an open-ended commitment to provide developing countries with additional finance, without the necessary corresponding commitments to conserving biodiversity. That is not of any interest to us or to them.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Has the Prime Minister heard of the threat issued yesterday by Commissioner Scrivener to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that he would be taken to court and Britain would be in real trouble if we did not agree, next Tuesday, to the long-term charging of VAT on food, gas, electricity and children's clothing? Will the Prime Minister give us a clear undertaking that there will be no surrender next Tuesday?

The Prime Minister: There is no question of the United Kingdom being forced to give up zero rates, which are guaranteed in the sixth VAT directive. The question at issue is whether the Council should agree to a legally binding minimum rate of VAT. We do not believe that that is necessary for the completion of the single market. A number of related issues remain to be resolved, including excise duties, but we cannot accept an agreement that would force member states to impose large increases in duty on spirits, to the detriment of our industry. The sixth directive is the key point on the substance of my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister agree that widespread poverty in the third world is a major cause of damage to the world environment? If he does agree, what new action will he be proposing in Rio to combat that poverty more effectively?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we have one of the most effective development aid programmes of any country in the world—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry that Opposition Members appear not to recognise that fact. I repeat, we have one of the most effective aid programmes anywhere in the world. As the right hon. Gentleman will know, with the Toronto terms and the Trinidad terms Britain led the way in encouraging countries across the world to write off large amounts of debt specifically to help the poorest countries.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister really cannot defend the Government's record on development aid. The Government have cut by half the amount and the value of official development aid to the third world since they have been in power. When the poorest countries in the world are putting a net £50 billion in debt repayments back into the richest countries in the world, does not the Prime Minister think that those industrialised countries should make

much bigger investment commitments to the conservation and protection of the world environment, not only to combat poverty in the third world but to conserve our global environment?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman touches on a matter on which there is agreement in substance across the House. There is no dispute about the need for help. Where I part company with the right hon. Gentleman is in his assertion that Britain has not led the way in the quantity and quality of assistance and aid that it has given for many years, not just in direct aid but in the substantial debt write-offs, to which I just referred but to which the right hon. Gentleman did not, and in the substantive amount of private sector investment that also goes into third-world countries. If the right hon. Gentleman is unwilling to take my word for that, I suggest that he talks to the leaders of the third-world countries and hears what they have to say about the quantity and quality of our assistance to them.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister will, no doubt, be speaking to some of the Heads of Government of third-world countries in the course of the next week or so and perhaps he will faithfully report to us the view of Britain's cut by half—I repeat that, because it is true—in overseas development assistance during the past 10 or 12 years. The crisis of poverty and environmental degradation is continuing. Will the Prime Minister now tell us what he will specifically propose in the way of action in Rio and afterwards in order to arrest the increasing tide of poverty and the increase in degradation, both of which are linked?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman really ought to know that we address the question of direct financial resources to overseas aid at the time of the public expenditure round. We have done so consistently and we have dramatically increased in real terms the amount of aid, and directed the aid better to those areas where it most needs to go. I shall certainly discuss that with fellow Heads of Government from other parts of the world, as I have done repeatedly in recent years. I am in a better position than the right hon. Gentleman to know their view on our contribution.

Mr. Jessel: When my right hon. Friend is in Rio, will he have the opportunity to mention to the Government of Brazil the concern in Britain about the murder of children on the streets of Rio?

The Prime Minister: I shall have a number of opportunities in Brazil to discuss matters with other Heads of Government and I shall certainly take the opportunity where appropriate to raise the point made by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister realise that the answers that he has given today to the massive challenges that face us at Rio are frankly pathetic? Does he not have any understanding that this is probably the last best chance that we have to allow the planet to heal itself and that if he and his fellow leaders will not rise to that challenge they will be condemned?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is talking copper-plated nonsense. The reality is that Britain has led the way in the preparation of much of the work that comes to fruition in Rio. It is this country which has led the way. This is the start of a continuing process. This is not, as the right hon. Gentleman apparently rather inaccurately believes, the beginning and end of the process. As I told the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) three weeks ago in the House, it will take a long time for all our ambitions on the environment to be reached. We are dealing with practical measures. The right hon. Gentleman may dream, but we have practical action to take.

Q2. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Will the Prime Minister take a few minutes off dithering as to how or whether he will vote at the Earth summit, to explain to the British people why, at a time when British unemployment is heading towards 3 million and the public sector borrowing requirement is on course to reach £40 billion, Britain's balance of payments deficit in April was in excess of £1,300 million? Is this country headed for an economic miracle or for an economic nightmare?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is, as usual, remarkably selective in what he says and looks at. If the hon. Gentleman had looked at what business men have said in the period since the election—*[Interruption.]* Well, business men know rather more about it than the hon. Gentleman will ever do. The hon. Gentleman might have seen the Confederation of British Industry report on small business men, who are more confident about growth now than at any time in the last few years. He might have noted also the EC Gallup survey, which shows a strong increase in confidence, and the sharp rise in confidence and activity in other CBI surveys. The hon. Gentleman might have seen a great deal more if he had removed the blinkers from his eyes.

Q3. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Arnold: During his visit to central Europe last week, did my right hon. Friend have the opportunity to meet the leaders of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, to discuss their potential applications to join the European Community?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I assure my hon. Friend that I had discussions with the leaders of each of those three countries on precisely that point. The freedom of those countries and their removal from the old Soviet bloc is one of the most welcome international developments since the second world war. They are now committed to democracy and to free market economics. During our presidency of the Community, we want to put solid flesh on the association agreements that we signed with them. We look forward to the day when they join the Community, even though that may not be until the turn of the century. Our judgment is that the best way to enhance democracy is to share it—and that is what we intend to do in the case of those countries.

Q4. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McMaster: Does the Prime Minister recall that during Question Time two weeks ago, he promised to respect the democratically expressed wishes of the people of Northern Ireland? If it was right to give that commitment to one part of the Union a fortnight ago, is it not right to give the same commitment to the people of Scotland today? When the Prime Minister visited Scotland yesterday, why did he promise only to think long and hard about Scotland's future—so long and hard that four hours later, he ruled out a Scottish Parliament within the United Kingdom? If the right hon. Gentleman is a democrat, will he give to the Scottish people the right to decide their own future in a multioption referendum?

The Prime Minister: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's latter question is no. As to his point about a tax-raising Parliament in Scotland, I ruled that out some time ago in the House and elsewhere for reasons that were sound then, are sound now and will remain sound in the future. The hon. Gentleman need not ask me about that matter—it is settled.

Mr. Alexander: Has my right hon. Friend taken note of the effectiveness of the temporary abolition a few months ago of stamp duty on house purchase? Bearing in mind that the Exchequer forwent very little revenue, will my right hon. Friend recommend to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer that when the temporary abolition expires in August, it be made permanent?

The Prime Minister: No. I am afraid that I cannot undertake to do that. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor will examine that matter in August. The original proposition was that stamp duty exemption would last until August and not longer.

Q5. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pendry: Is the Prime Minister aware that the staggering increase in crime in London that was revealed yesterday is symptomatic of a worrying concern throughout the land? That includes my constituency, where crime has doubled in the past decade. With that reality in mind, will the Prime Minister do something positive, such as unlocking the handcuffs from the Home Secretary so that he can get to grips with the Government's own crime prevention report—the Morgan report, which said something positive about crime in this country and which the Government shelved last August? Would not that be the way for the Prime Minister at least to appease the chairman of the Police Federation, who said only last month that the Government were blaming the police because they had no ideas of their own?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman might care to examine the increased resources in both manpower and equipment, quite apart from the increased legal facilities that have been made available to the police. I also think that we should not be blind to the achievements of the Metropolitan police, such as the improvements in the clear-up rate that we have seen in recent years. They have made dramatic improvements in a number of areas.

Another point, with which I know that the hon. Gentleman will agree, is that tackling crime is not just a matter for the police. Increasingly, people in society at all levels can be seen playing their own role, and it is essential for that to continue.

Canary Wharf

3.30 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham) *(by private notice):* To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about the future of the Canary Wharf project, and what decision, if any, has been made about the transfer of civil servants.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): The future of the Canary Wharf development is in the hands of the administrators who were appointed last week to resolve the financial problems of Olympia and York with their creditors. The Government have made it clear that they have no intention of intervening in the affairs of the company, and it would be inappropriate for me to make any further comment on that at this time. There has, however, been much speculation in the media about the possible move of civil servants to docklands. I am grateful for this opportunity to clarify the position.

As the House knows, my predecessor decided in February that my Department's headquarters at 2 Marsham street should be demolished. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] That decision was widely welcomed—and clearly still is. A timetable for moving staff by the end of 1993 was then identified. In the context of that decision, consideration is being given to the relocation of those of the Department's staff who need to remain in London, but not in Westminster. As my predecessor told the House, the Department was particularly asked to examine the opportunities and value for money of relocation to docklands.

It is clear that exceptional value for money may now be secured in docklands. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is an important statement, which I want to hear. Let us carry on with it in good order.

Mr. Howard: The work that has been done by the Department's advisers has reached a stage that makes it possible for me to announce that some 2,000 civil servants in my Department will move to docklands, provided that we are able to secure fully commercial terms giving value for money to the taxpayer. Detailed negotiations are now under way in respect of three developments: Harbour Exchange, East India dock and Canary Wharf. Subject to successful negotiations, I hope soon to proceed to the stage at which it will be possible for me to sign heads of agreement in respect of one of those developments.

A number of other Departments are also considering docklands as a location for their staff. The Department of Trade and Industry is working to a timetable similar to my own in respect of the Radio Communications Agency. That Department, with a number of other major Departments—including the Department of Transport—is reviewing its future accommodation needs, and is including docklands among the options for study. Decisions are likely later this year.

In all those decisions, I have been very much aware of the concerns of staff and of the need to put in place arrangements that will help to minimise the effect of any such moves on staff in the Departments concerned.

Mr. Gould: Is it not astonishing that the Government are still dithering about accepting their responsibility for a fiasco that is largely of their own creation? Do not Ministers accept that it was they who irresponsibly stoked up a property boom and who equally deliberately brought it crashing down, and that it was their blind faith in market forces which excluded the interests of local people and ensured that essential infrastructure simply did not get built? Canary Wharf is a monument to the Government's folly, as well as to the folly of the banks involved.

Is it not time to do what should have been done in the first place: make a proper assessment of where the public interest, and therefore the public responsibility, lies? That can be done only on the basis of full disclosure and total transparency. It cannot be done through a back-door deal to channel taxpayers' money to Olympia and York by way of rents for office space that cannot otherwise be let. Since that is so clearly what is in Ministers' minds, what consultation, if any, has there been with the civil servants who will have to move? What assessment has been made of the costs, administrative and financial, that will be involved? What guarantee is there that there will be no element of hidden subsidy in the move that is proposed?

Does not the Secretary of State recognise that the response of the House to his announcement will be reflected by the response of the people of this country? They will recognise not only that the Olympia and York investment is at stake but that Ministers' reputations are being protected. Is it not the case that the public interest cannot be properly protected unless we know to what extent it is already involved? When will Ministers tell us the truth about how much taxpayers' money has already found its way into this project by way of direct grant, tax breaks and rate relief, and when will the Government publish the agreements concluded between Olympia and York and Government Departments so that we can judge what is involved if the Jubilee line extension, which is surely essential to the project, is to be undertaken?

No one wants to see this project fail. We on this side of the House have no investment in failure—nor do the long-suffering people of east London—but we cannot judge the action needed until we know the facts. It is time for the Government to come clean and to face up, at last, to their responsibilities.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman is living in a fantasy world. There is no question whatever of back-door deals. There is no question of subsidy, hidden or otherwise. There has never been any subsidy for this development. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the grants which have been made to the London Docklands development corporation for the development of docklands as a whole are a matter of public record and are there for the House, the country and the world to see. The decisions on relocation will be taken in full consultation with the trade unions that represent the staff. The decision which I have just announced to narrow the options was taken on the basis of a value-for-money survey that was put in place, following my predecessor's much welcomed decision to vacate the Marsham street building so that it could be demolished.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Did my right hon. and learned Friend note that the one group whom the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) failed to mention was the taxpayer, and that most normal people will regard the Secretary of State as doing nothing less than his duty in trying to ensure better value for money for the taxpayer?

If I may ask my right hon. and learned Friend one specific question about the transport infrastructure, what principle lies behind the proposition that the taxpayer has funded £250 million for one and a half miles of road while the private sector is expected to fund part of the cost of the railway line?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right to identify the criterion that we have applied and pursued in considering this matter. He referred to the cost of the Jubilee line extension in the second part of his question. It is widely accepted that there is a role for mixed public and private sector funding in such a development. The owners of the Canary Wharf development, whoever they may be, will benefit from the fact that there will be a station at Canary Wharf on the Jubilee line extension. That is why Olympia and York thought it appropriate to offer a contribution of £400 million towards the cost of the line and why I have no doubt that any other owners of the development will think it right to make a similar contribution.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does not the Secretary of State's announcement confirm that the rescue or salvation of Canary Wharf will not be achieved only by market forces, any more than was the development of docklands in the 1980s? Is it not true that, although the jobs of civil servants are important, the jobs of people in the docklands boroughs, with some of the highest unemployment rates in the country, are far more important and far more a reason for ensuring that the project does not fail?

If civil servants are to travel from Whitehall to docklands, is it not the most ridiculous proposition in the world that there should be no direct rail link? Do not the Government realise that the money for the Jubilee line extension must be secured by the end of this month, since otherwise the team of engineers and so on working on it will not be in place and the project will fall apart?

Mr. Howard: On the hon. Gentleman's last point, the team at London Transport will be kept in being while negotiations take place over the completion of the Jubilee line extension. I was interested in the hon. Gentleman's observations about jobs in docklands. He did not mention the fact that the number of jobs in docklands has doubled since the development corporation was established, and there are now 60,000 people employed in docklands. I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman would want to give some credit for what has been achieved by the corporation during its existence. The hon. Gentleman seemed to be coming perilously close to suggesting that the Government should bale out this project. That is not our intention, and we shall not do so.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): My right hon. Friend is already aware of the widespread welcome for the imminent demise of Marsham street. However, if we are to make Westminster a more green and pleasant land, is it not illogical to add to the office surplus by putting even more offices in that location?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is widespread acceptance that the Jubilee line extension must be built, but that this is a time to be looking not for less private sector contribution but for other means of bringing more private sector participation into that underground line and others as well?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend's first point anticipates a decision that has not yet been made about what is to happen at Marsham street. I agree with him that the principle of mixed private and public sector funding for developments such as the Jubilee line extension has obtained increasing acceptance and will, I expect, play a continuing role in such developments in the future.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): You may be aware, Madam Speaker, that more than 1,000 of my constituents are taking legal action to seek redress for the disruption caused to their lives by the Canary Wharf development and the Limehouse link road. My constituents want to know whether they will obtain any benefits from the public money that has gone into the area. If Government Departments move to Canary Wharf, will the Government have a policy of employing local people in the civil service, or will there be only part-time cleaning jobs and other jobs of that ilk?

If 5,000 civil servants move into the area, will the Jubilee line extension be built or will my constituents have to suffer daily the nightmarish congestion that they suffered whenever there was an event at the arena? Will the Government stop the LDDC giving crazy planning permission for further superfluous office developments such as that granted to Olympia and York for Heron Quays only a few weeks ago? Will the Secretary of State confirm or deny the recent press statements that the LDDC is to give land to developers and allow deferred payment until they make a profit? If the right hon. and learned Gentleman disputes my figures of nearly £3 billion of direct and indirect subsidy, when will he produce his own figures for the public money involved?

Mr. Howard: On the last point, I have already made it clear that the funds made available to the London Docklands development corporation are a matter of record and have been published more than once. I am surprised by the attitude that the hon. Lady adopts to the considerable number of jobs that have been created in docklands. I should have thought that she would welcome that.

As for the relocation of staff who work for the Department at the moment, wherever they live, we shall be assisting them when we move to docklands, as I expect we shall be able to do. I should have thought that the hon. Lady would be as keen as anyone to encourage the private sector to contribute £400 million to the cost of the Jubilee line extension, which will secure that extension's future.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Will my right hon. and learned Friend be realistic and recognise that civil servants such as those in my constituency in north-west London, who are prepared to put up with a difficult journey to central London because they welcome the good schools and the pleasant residential area in which they live, will not be prepared to travel to the Isle of Dogs unless good, effective and reliable high-speed surface transport is in place? To that end, is it not vital that the Jubilee line be completed—if necessary, with public money—and that the crossrail link be finished, with a platform at Northwood in my constituency, which was promised and then taken away?

Mr. Howard: I very much hope, and indeed expect for the reasons that I have given, that the Jubilee line extension will be completed. That line, and the

[Mr. Howard]

considerable improvements to the infrastructure of docklands, will make it quite feasible for civil servants to travel to docklands from my hon. Friend's constituency and from other parts of London and surrounding areas. As I said in my statement, we shall put in place arrangements to help to minimise the effects of any move on Departments' staff.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Is the Secretary of State aware that he is dealing with the biggest failure of planning in post-war Britain? It is a perfect example of the folly of proceeding with a massive office development without making any sensible provision for public transport. Will he now answer, truthfully and directly, the question that was put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould): what is the cost, in terms of incentives paid for by the taxpayer, of the enterprise zone—in particular, the amount of money available by the suspension of the business rate for office development at Canary Wharf—and of the special facilities offered to assist construction by writing off initial allowances against expenditure? What is the cost to the taxpayer of those great concessions for Canary Wharf? Does he not accept that, if that vast amount of money is correct—we believe the figure to be correct—he has not given the House, or anyone in the east end, any prospect for the future? He is apparently prepared to write off completely his former investment.

Mr. Howard: The right hon. Gentleman's criticisms are entirely misconceived. I was astonished by the form in which they were made, because, when he held my office, docklands was renowned for dereliction—and for nothing else. Under the London Docklands development corporation, the position of docklands has been transformed, as the right hon. Gentleman knows only too well. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I would be very much obliged if hon. Gentlemen would not bawl and shout from sedentary positions.

Mr. Howard: The right hon. Gentleman may be aware that the total sums made available to all enterprise zones amount to £660 million and that there are no figures available for individual enterprise zones. The benefits made available to docklands are in no small part responsible for that. The number of jobs in docklands has doubled over the relevant period. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will welcome that.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there is an interesting comparison between the new business centre development in docklands and La Défense in Paris? The development in Paris did not have an easy route, but in the end it has been highly successful. I am therefore optimistic that the docklands development will also be successful. However, there is one difference between Paris and here. The strategy of putting in a very effective public transport infrastructure was followed there, and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will give that a high priority here.

Mr. Howard: I have no doubt that the future of docklands will be as exciting as we originally contemplated it would be, and that it will realise its full development potential. We have, of course, done a great deal to improve the infrastructure in and towards docklands. We are building roads, and some roads have been completed.

I have referred to the £400 million contribution offered by Olympia and York to the Jubilee line extension, which we expect any other owner of Canary Wharf to contribute. The taxpayer is contributing £1·5 billion towards the cost of the Jubliee line extension. We want and expect to put in place in docklands a partnership between the private sector, which I hope we shall see not only in docklands, but elsewhere in our country in future.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does not the Secretary of State agree that the collapse of Canary Wharf exemplifies the collapse of Thatcherite economics? Is it not a fact that, in addition to the inducements in the enterprise zone outlined by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), there was no inquiry into the strategic planning implications of Canary Wharf, that public funds met most of the cost of the Bank extension and that the Jubilee line extension would not have been built without the presence of Canary Wharf? Is it not now a fact that the frontiers of the state statutory have been rolled back, that enormous sums of public money have rolled in and that the powers of Ministers and central Government have greatly increased, which has given them arbitrary powers of patronage over companies that come in? Even with all that, there is no assurance of success.

Mr. Howard: There is no question of arbitrary behaviour and no question of patronage. It is not the case that there was an absence of planning in docklands. The London Docklands development corporation drew up a plan and consulted the local authorities on it. The difference is that, under the LDDC, action has been taken to deal with the dereliction which was the hallmark of docklands when the local authorities were responsible for planning and development decisions. We have seen great progress made since the corporation was put in place.

The hon. Gentleman began by referring to the collapse of Canary Wharf. Canary Wharf has not collapsed. The fact that the company that developed it has now appointed administrators is an entirely different matter. There is a clear distinction between the fate of one private sector company and the fate of docklands. Docklands will realise its development potential in the future, to the benefit of all those who live in it and of the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, given the scale of dereliction and unemployment in docklands, one should pay tribute this afternoon to the corporation, of which Canary Wharf is only one part, and to the vision and courage of the Reichmann brothers, without whom the development would not have been possible? Although they failed, they failed in the teeth of the worst recession since the war. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, as well as the Jubilee line, there is obviously a need to improve road communications? What is the up-to-date position on roads?

Mr. Howard: I can certainly help my hon. Friend with regard to the question of roads. Great progress is being made with the Limehouse link and the associated docklands highway. Those key road links will help greatly

to assist movement into and out of docklands. The docklands light railway is now operating to 95 per cent reliability. The perception of its reliability that still undoubtedly persists is no longer consistent with its performance.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Is the Secretary of State sure that all those 2,000 jobs need to remain in London? Is there not a case for considering the dispersal of at least some of them? Is he aware that London weighting will still be allowed in docklands, but it is not allowed in Manchester, the north-east, Scotland or Wales? It has been estimated that London weighting can add up to £10 per square foot to the rent of such premises in London.

Mr. Howard: A very large proportion of my Department's staff already work outside of London. The decision to relocate in docklands relates to staff who need to be in London because they need to have regular contacts with Ministers, but do not need to be in quite such close proximity as to justify the retention of accommodation in Westminster. The point made by the right hon. Gentleman was taken into account.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on.

Yugoslavia (Sanctions)

3.55 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): As hon. Members will know, the United Nations Security Council decided on 30 May to impose sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro. The resolution contains one of the most comprehensive series of measures ever adopted by the United Nations. They include a ban on air links, a trade and oil embargo, a freeze on assets, a ban on official sporting contacts and an agreement to reduce the level of staff at diplomatic missions of the self-proclaimed Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The ban on arms sales adopted last year remains in force.

This and other elements of the embargo will be monitored by the Security Council committee established by one of the earlier resolutions on Yugoslavia. We shall play a full part in the work of that committee. We are also taking steps at home to implement the sanctions in the United Kingdom and dependent territories. Interim measures have been taken by the DTI and the Treasury, and Orders in Council will be put to the Privy Council on 4 June. The Yugoslav ambassador has been asked to leave.

The vote on this resolution reflects almost total unanimity among the international community. The world has been shocked by the persistent shellings and killings, and particularly recently by the carnage in Sarajevo. The resolution reflects condemnation of Serbia's brutal and expansionist policies under its present leadership. President Milosevic has refused to rein in the Serbs in Bosnia and has actively supported them through supplies of men and equipment. Under the pretext of withdrawal, he has transferred large parts of the federal army to local command in Bosnia.

Those warlords are using terror as a political weapon to create ethnically pure Serbian areas which will be attached to Serbia itself. There was never any justification for that policy. Before the fighting began, there was no threat to the welfare of the large Serbian community in Bosnia-Herzegovina from either Croats or Muslims. Croatia too has profited from the situation by infiltrating men and equipment into Croatian-inhabited areas of Herzegovina.

We hope that the mandatory provisions of resolution 757 will convince the leadership in Belgrade that they must abandon their present policies. We do not wish to penalise the Serbian people or to destroy their economy, but we must bring home to Mr. Milosevic and his supporters that the international community cannot tolerate his present policy.

The immediate requirement is for a complete cessation of hostilities. Next we must establish conditions in which the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees can pursue their humanitarian tasks. They have our full support: we have so far given a total of £9·68 million to their appeals. The Belgrade authorities must also take steps to immobilise and disarm the irregular units which have been responsible for so much of the mayhem. This should allow the displaced persons who have now fled to all the five remaining republics to return to their homes. This in turn should lead to a political solution on the lines already prepared by and in principle agreed through the

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good offices of Lord Carrington. I am in close touch with my European and United States colleagues as we work for those objectives.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his statement. We give our full support to United Nations Security Council resolution 757, and we urge that the United Nations sanctions should be rigorously enforced. As the right hon. Gentleman will recall, Opposition Front-Bench Members urged such comprehensive United Nations sanctions many months ago. It is possible that the situation might not have got so tragically out of hand if action had been taken sooner, but, now that action has been taken, we must hope and work for its success.

The right hon. Gentleman has not mentioned the use of force, and I welcome that. The situation is far too confused for forcible intervention from outside to do any positive good. It is certain that force would lead to further unnecessary bloodshed and increase the number of people at risk. I hope that the Government will stand out inflexibly against any suggestions of forcible intervention by the European Community.

It is my view that the excellent and admirable efforts of the European Community and its tireless representative, Lord Carrington, have been damaged, and perhaps to some extent even negated, by the unwise capitulation of European Community Foreign Ministers to the insistence of the German Government that every little self-declared republic in what was Yugoslavia should be given international recognition. That policy may have been a further incentive towards a disintegration that was always inherent.

The European Community should have no military role in this conflict or indeed in any other. The need is not to extend the conflict but to maintain it. The Foreign Secretary is right to assign principal responsibility to Mr. Milosevic and the Serbs. The acts of destruction of the Serbs toward Dubrovnik, although not the worst of their atrocities, are in their sheer wantonness symbolic of their lack of regard for a country which they say they want to safeguard.

The Foreign Secretary is equally right to make it clear that the Serbs are not the only guilty party—that others share that guilt. No solution will be acceptable unless it is based on the restoration of stability, coupled with the safeguarding of all minorities, and that includes Serbian minorities. We hope that the United Nations actions will provide a possibility for such a solution, and it is on that basis that we give the United Nations our full support.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). In view of his personal announcement today, may I say how much I shall miss him? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Other hon. Members will also miss him. The right hon. Gentleman has made for himself a reputation for a partisan ferocity which I can do nothing about and which I do not want to spoil this afternoon, as he has not displayed it. In my dealings with him from the Foreign Office and the Home Office, our exchanges have sometimes been pointed, but never excessively so. In the necessary dealings between us outside the House, I have found him to be invaluably straightforward and almost invariably helpful.

The right hon. Gentleman made a number of interesting points. He suggested—he may be right—that earlier sanctions might have prevented some of the trouble. There would certainly have been no support for sanctions of that kind at an earlier stage, as I found when I suggested oil sanctions towards the end of last year. Recent events—in part, the persecution of Muslims in Bosnia—have changed the situation in the United Nations.

The right hon. Gentleman wisely referred to the use of force. I notice various operations now being sketched in the newspapers. It is much easier to conceive of such operations in theory than to launch them in practice. It is much easier to launch them than to see how they could successfully be brought to an end, so caution on the subject is necessary.

I do not wish to go into the argument about recognition all over again. As I told the House in the Queen's Speech debate, the best answer would have been Yugoslavia by consent, but in the end that was not attainable. Once we said goodbye to that hope, towards the end of last summer, we were left with a series of republics. The question of how one dealt with and recognised them became a matter of timing rather than principle.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the House at this stage that, if hon. Members ask precise questions on the Foreign Secretary's statement and we have short replies, it obviously follows that I shall be able to call far more Members.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Of course there is agreement that international action was necessary to try to stop the fighting in Yugoslavia, but may I put it to my right hon. Friend that stopping the fighting should be the end purpose? Therefore, will he make it clear to those who advocate military action in Yugoslavia that it is much easier to get into a warlike situation there than to get out of it? Above all, we must avoid Yugoslavia becoming not just the Israel of the Balkans but the Vietnam of Europe.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend knows a good deal about Yugoslavia, and his words of warning are wise. What we can do and are doing is to offer negotiation, a conference and ideas, monitor the ceasefire if it is achieved, and give trade and economic help to those who co-operate and take measures against those who do not. That is necessary, and that we will do.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the Foreign Secretary accept that the majority of Members of this House applaud the action that has been taken by the United Nations to bring an end to the bloodshed in Yugoslavia? In future policy decisions within the European Community, will he take into account two possible dangers? First, we must be sufficiently outspoken about the human rights record in Croatia and especially the Croatians' attitude to the Serbian minority there. Secondly, while we would like to see the end of the Milosevic regime—I certainly would—there is a danger that the extremists who may control the guerrilla units in Bosnia will take a hand. Instead of better than Milosevic, we may have worse. Some worse people are around.

Mr. Hurd: On Croatia, the hon. Gentleman is right. It is important that the Croatian Government should carry

through the legislation to protect the rights of its minorities to completion, as Lord Carrington has recommended. We are watching that carefully. I do not want to pick and choose between the different candidates for rulers or the Government of Serbia. That is not our job. Our job is to ensure that the Serbs and Montenegrans, with whom we have no basic quarrel, observe the rules of international life, as they have emerged.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the huge majority of people will support him in his hopes that the proposed sanctions will create a change of policy in Belgrade? But will he recall that, often before from that Dispatch Box, pious hopes have been expressed that sanctions will cause the collapse of a regime, whether Rhodesia or, more recently, Iraq? The truth is that sanctions rarely seem to cause collapse. Such hopes are often followed by further discussion about the use of force. Will the Foreign Secretary give the House an undertaking that if, as may well happen, there is increasing talk about force in the future, he will go towards that option with only the greatest possible circumspection?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my right hon. Friend. There is no magic about sanctions. However, I remind him that, neither in the case of Iraq nor now in the case of Serbia and Montenegro, do sanctions aim to change a regime. That has never been their purpose in those cases. I agree exactly with the formulation of the second part of my right hon. Friend's question.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Now that sanctions appear to be flavour of the month for the Tory Government, what has changed in respect of the sanctions that they refused to apply to South Africa and those that were supposed to be implemented against nations in the Gulf? What is new?

Mr. Hurd: What is new is that there has been a good deal of progress in South Africa, which is therefore the vindication of the stand that we took and of the lifting of most of the sanctions by the international community, following our lead.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): My right hon. Friend's statement will be welcomed, as will resolution 757. I think that the House shares the view expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), that it is sometimes extremely difficult to make sanctions work. We have certainly seen that elsewhere in the world. Can my right hon. Friend tell the House what consideration has been given to a blockade to make sanctions work, and especially to a naval blockade, because it runs short of using force?

Mr. Hurd: There are no plans for that at present. Under international law, there is an obligation on all members of the United Nations to comply with the resolution, and a monitoring committee has been set up in New York. We shall have to see what happens, especially with regard to oil supplies, which traditionally have come down the Danube through Romania, but it is premature to assume that people will not comply with their obligations.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Does the Foreign Secretary recall that, about eight months ago, some of us argued for sanctions to be taken against the then Yugoslavia, especially against the Serbs, and that we met with blank refusals? Will he tell the House what attempts will be made to monitor sanctions? He just mentioned oil and, as there are no natural oil resources within Serbia, if oil can be cut off clearly sanctions will work. What monitoring will take place?

Mr. Hurd: I have just answered the hon. Gentleman's question. He was too busy preparing it to listen to my answer. He is right about the importance of oil. As he knows, I suggested oil sanctions some time ago, but there was no support for them. I am glad that there is support now. There is some oil production in Serbia and Croatia, but most oil is imported. It is therefore important that the flow of oil should be monitored by the sanctions committee, which I described to the House when the hon. Gentleman was not listening.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend explain how the sad fighting in Yugoslavia affects British national interests? Or is it the case that we have now taken on the role of some sort of second-class world policeman, whenever we can find a similar policeman among what he grandly calls the international community?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is entitled to take that view, but I do not think that it is shared by many of his constituents. When, night after night, people see on television destruction and massacre in a European city, most of them do not expect us to send in troops, but they expect us to take some sensible action, if we can, to bring that suffering to an end. I am not in favour of exaggerating what we can do, or of pretending that we are or can be a policeman. I am not speaking on behalf of the Twelve, or of the United Nations: I am merely saying that, where we can help to bring such suffering to an end, I am sure that it is the wish of the House and the country that we should do so.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Does the Foreign Secretary recognise that, welcome though the imposition of sanctions is, they are likely to bear down disproportionately on the Albanian community in Kosovo? As well as working with his colleagues at European Community and United Nations level to make sanctions effective, is he bearing in mind the need for continuing diplomatic pressure to ensure the proper restoration of autonomy to Kosovo?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has mentioned an important matter. That is the next possible tragedy spot, if one may describe it that way. It is important for the Serbs to accept the need for full autonomy for Kosovo. I discussed with Lord Carrington this morning, as well as with the Portuguese Foreign Minister—who is President of the Council of Ministers—how we can bring diplomatic pressure to bear in Tirana and Belgrade.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): It is accepted that Serbia is not the only offending party in the region. Therefore, sanctions should surely be imposed on Croatia to force it to stop its violence.

Mr. Hurd: The arms embargo applies to all the former republics of Yugoslavia. I have mentioned Croatia, but I have tried to get the balance right, which is increasingly accepted in the House. The Croatians are not and have not been blameless, but the main responsibility for the

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mayhem, killing and suffering rests with Serbs, whether Bosnian Serbs, irregulars or those under the direct control of Belgrade.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In relation to his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), does the Foreign Secretary recollect that some of us suported him most vocally, in and out of the House, on the imposition of oil sanctions at the beginning of the crisis?

Does the Foreign Secretary think that it is wise to insist that the Yugoslav ambassador withdraw? Did he hear the ambassador say last night on "The World Tonight" that perhaps this is the time when he is most needed? What is the purpose, other than for reasons of a diplomatic dance, of making the ambassador go? Finally, are we sure that arms and oil are not being supplied by Iraq to Serbia?

Mr. Hurd: On the ambassador, it was part of the Security Council resolution to reduce levels of diplomatic representation by the former federal republic of Yugoslavia. It will, of course, keep representatives here: we are not expelling the whole diplomatic mission. It was right, in line with what others are doing and right in the circumstances, that the ambassador should be asked, courteously but firmly, to go.

Supplies of oil to Serbia and Montenegro——

Mr. Dalyell: I voted for the oil embargo.

Mr. Hurd: Yes. However, it was not the hon. Gentleman's vote that was necessary on that occasion, but support in the United Nations, which has only recently been forthcoming. All possible breaches of the embargo, particularly in oil, need to be monitored carefully.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Although I agree with my right hon. Friend about the ambassador, what justification is there for allowing the building that he has been occupying to continue to enjoy the status of an embassy?

Mr. Hurd: We are in a bit of limbo on that, and my hon. Friend has put his finger on the illogical position. We have an embassy in Belgrade and it is important to keep contacts going. Therefore, we do not intend to close the Yugoslav mission here. Equally, Yugoslav representation at the United Nations is in a type of limbo. If the situation continues and sanctions do not do the job we hope, we shall clearly have to consider such questions again.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I welcome the condemnation of the expansionist policies of the Serbian leadership, which were clearly demonstrated years ago when it overthrew autonomy in Kosovo and Vojvodina. Its intention to create a greater Serbia was clearly signalled last year and it is a matter of regret that the international community did not respond quickly enough, because the tragedies might have been averted.

Is the Foreign Secretary aware that there is still some unfinished business in greater Serbia, in the region of Macedonia? Would it be possible to take some proactive steps to prevent that region from being ignited, because there are countries other than Serbia that might fish in those troubled waters?

Mr. Hurd: There certainly are: the hon. Gentleman is quite right. I am glad that, in Skopje, a mission from the European Community is establishing a contact with the Macedonian authorities for the first time. I hope that we shall receive a report next week on Macedonia's needs. The hon. Gentleman, who follows this subject, will know that the attitude of the Greek Government presents a substantial difficulty to recognition of Macedonia, but that does not debar the type of mission that is in Macedonia now.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): May I express my appreciation to my right hon. Friend for the constructive role he took in securing sanctions against Serbia by the United Nations? They are a valuable instrument of pressure to demonstrate to the Government in Belgrade and to the wider world that force should not be allowed to prevail against the democratic expression of self-determination. If that were allowed to prevail, a potentially explosive and damaging example would be given to central and eastern Europe. Is it not therefore necessary that physical measures underpin the sanctions —perhaps in the form of a naval blockade or the inspection of air cargoes at their point of departure?

Mr. Hurd: Let us see how we get on. I agree with the first part of my hon. Friend's question. The monitoring committee, as it showed effectively in the case of Iraq, will be able to pick up breaches, and we will then need to decide what measures might be useful in dealing with them.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that the majority of people in Britain are bound to support the policy of sanctions, especially when they see on their television screens, and read about, massacres such as that which killed outright people standing in a bread queue last week—another crime against humanity? Does he accept that there is almost unanimous opinion in the House—and, in my view, in the country at large—that no military force should be used by outside countries, certainly not by Britain, and that British troops should under no circumstances get involved in such a vicious Balkan civil war?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making those points. He picks up a point that several Members on both sides of the House have made about the need for extreme caution in that respect.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my right hon. Friend please confirm that there are no circumstances under which British forces would be deployed on Yugoslavian soil, apart from monitoring activities for the United Nations, bearing in mind that they would not know who the enemy was and would be caught in the crossfire, meaning that we should be sending people to be slaughtered? The Foreign Secretary could perhaps concede that we may need to play our part in a blockade if sanctions did not work. I hope and pray that they work. I hope that my right hon. Friend will go so far as to say that British troops will not be deployed on Yugoslavian soil.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend or I have told the House that we are contributing a field ambulance, involving about 250 men, to the United Nations force

which is being deployed in Croatia. I note the extreme reluctance which my hon. Friend voices for anything further.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Is it possible for assistance to be given to Yugoslav citizens in this country, some of whom are afraid to return home because of the fighting in their home areas and others who want to return but who came here on return tickets and are stranded, and short of money, because of the suspension of flights?

Mr. Hurd: This situation has many casualties, some of them much more poignant than the hon. Gentleman describes. Many people's lives are disrupted or worse by this situation. I am sure that the Home Secretary will look at any individual cases of people wanting to stay here, but the rules are the rules, and of course people know them.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Is it not a case of adopting a policy of too little, too late, making the situation much worse and more difficult to deal with? Will the right hon. Gentleman give details of the time scale within which he hopes the sanctions will work? Will he make it clear that there must be a cessation of hostilities by the Serbians within days rather than weeks, failing which, other options will have to be considered?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman will have heard quite a consensus of views up to this point on the concept of the use of force. I do not think it would be wise to impose a time limit. The Security Council has not done so. It has imposed an unprecedentedly severe package of measures, which will bear hard on the authorities and people in Serbia and Montenegro. We must now see how that works out.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): To what extent did Mr. Baker's statement force the hand of people such as the right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Hurd: The American Secretary of State has always made it clear that he expects Europe to take the lead on this issue. It is not a matter on which the Americans have taken a consistent forward line. The fact that, faced with the latest killings in Sarajevo, he expressed an American opinion so forcefully, greatly helped the proceedings in the Security Council. A significant fact was the positive Russian vote, which would have come as quite a surprise in Belgrade and will, I hope, help to produce a good effect.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): As we discuss the matter now, certain militiamen are still pounding Sarajevo, killing people in bread queues and Red Cross personnel. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the United Nations takes its responsibility seriously, for example by considering the control of Sarajevo airport by the UN? The Institute of Strategic Studies and other military people say that, if we had the will, the fighting could be stopped within 24 hours. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the UN undertakes such activities and provides adequate protection for the land convoys that are taking food and medical equipment to the beleaguered people of Sarajevo?

Mr. Hurd: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will think this through. He suggests that we should consider taking over Sarajevo airport. It is difficult to imagine Governments being willing to contribute troops to fighting their way to control over the airport; if they succeeded, the temptation—indeed, the incentive—to go on and take over control of the city would be substantial, because the airport without the city is pointless. Therefore, troops would be involved not just in air strikes but in operations on the ground, which are easy to conceive but hard to launch, and even harder to bring to a successful end.

Points of Order

4.25 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As more than 5,000 pensioners of the Maxwell pension schemes have been told that they will not receive any further pensions, and as Maxwell-controlled Liechtenstein companies, beyond the reach of the creditors and pensioners, have been uncovered, I rise to ask whether you have received any request from the Secretary of State for Social Security to make a statement on what steps he proposes to take to protect these pensioners from falling into poverty, through no fault of their own, over the next few weeks.

We keep being told that the Secretary of State is about to make a statement on the necessary reform of pension fund legislation, which the Government have studiously neglected for the past 10 years. What is urgent is a statement on the position of the Maxwell pensioners. As the Government are clearly liable, because of their failure to implement relevant protective regulations under the Social Security Act 1990, and also because of the manifest failure of the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation, will you use your good offices to ensure that we have a statement in the next few days on the essential issue of protecting the Maxwell pensioners?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman gives me more authority than I have. I have no means of instructing a Minister to make a statement. Perhaps I can answer the hon. Gentleman by saying that, had a statement been intended, it would have been on the annunciator. I received no such notice.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I think that this is a matter on which you are competent to rule. How can we get the Government to hold a debate on their policy on environment and development before the Rio summit? Am I right in thinking that the only way that Opposition Members can force such a debate is for a motion of no confidence in the Government's policy to be tabled today, and for that motion to secure the support of the Leader of the Labour party? Would not that mean that it had to be the first item of business tomorrow and had to be the subject of debate? We would then at last make sure that we debated the subject before the Government made policy, changed policy or gave up policy in Rio on behalf of this country.

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman were to reflect, he would realise that half-day debates are given to Opposition parties. He may care to use such an opportunity to debate this important subject.

Mr. Hughes: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. You are right, but there are no Opposition days set down in the notified days of business. I am led to believe by what I have read in "Erskine May" that one can get priority for a debate through tabling a motion of no confidence. That point is not made explicit in "Erskine May", so I would be grateful if, on advice, you told us whether that is the way to secure such a debate this week.

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman had looked far enough into "Erskine May" he would have seen that no Speaker ever gives that type of guidance across the Floor of the House—even me. However, if he would like to come to see me, I will try to assist.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm, as your predecessors have always done, to the best of my knowledge and certainly within my parliamentary lifetime, that one of the jobs of the House of Commons is to defend the interests of ordinary people? If only one person is subject to injury, that person should still be able to have the matter raised in the House of Commons. I ask you this because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has pointed out from the Front Bench, there are pensioners living a life of destitution because the pension that they expected to have has been stolen from them by one of the most notorious of all crooks.

As Ministers refuse to make a statement, Madam Speaker, and bearing in mind that the Maxwell family apparently owns considerable assets abroad, what can be done to try to ensure that those people, who are after all entitled to justice, have their claim dealt with in the House of Commons?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that that is not a matter for the Chair. The Chair is not in control of the business of the House. It is for the Government, through the usual channels, to determine business.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it not also true that, notwithstanding the fact that the Speaker has no power to organise business, you would have considerable power if an application were made under Standing Order No. 20 for a debate on the Government's attitude to Rio in order to try to influence the Government before they made their decision in Brazil? Is it not also true that you would have similar powers in the event of a private notice question? If there were an application for a debate under Standing Order No. 20 or for a private notice question, you would have a good case for giving some guidance on how the matter could be dealt with in the House. In the end, Madam Speaker, you do have power to help in the matter, which is particularly relevant since the Opposition do not have an Opposition day on which to raise the matter with any immediacy.

Madam Speaker: As I am sure the House appreciates, I always look extremely carefully at all private notice questions and applications under Standing Order No. 20 that come across my desk.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Am I right in thinking that, although it is usual for Standing Order No. 20 applications to be submitted to you before midday on any sitting day, such an application can be made at any time? For instance, such an application could be made now, on the usual basis that the matter is urgent, specific and requires immediate attention, if you were prepared to accept it.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is not quite right. I could consider such an application only if the matter was of extreme urgency and the urgency was not known before 12 noon on the day in question.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Certainly you and I were here during Prime Minister's questions, but I am not sure which other hon. Members were present. If I recall correctly, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear from the Dispatch Box that he hoped to secure an agreement at Rio and that that would not be the beginning and the end of the matter but that it would continue for many years with actions and agreements. Therefore, there can be no urgency about such a debate.

Madam Speaker: We are now involving ourselves in debate. We need not repeat the Prime Minister's words. They will be in *Hansard* for all of us to see.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to Statutory Instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Legal Aid (Scotland)

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.33 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is now nearly three weeks since the House approved the resolutions on which the Bill is based. On that occasion, I said that the debate that underlay the Bill was a continuation of the debate which decided the general election. It is not simply a debate which was relevant to the general election—it is a debate about the decisive issue in the general election.

The issue that was at stake and was decided on 9 April is as clear as it is simple. The question was whether the electorate supported the tax policy set out with great clarity by the Government, or a tax policy espoused by one of the Opposition parties. The electorate gave a clear and unambiguous answer, and I clearly think that their answer was right.

The Government believe that tax policy should be driven by two primary considerations. First, we believe that, in a free society, the first call on the fruits of wealth creation rests with those who are responsible for that wealth creation process. We firmly believe that, if somebody takes a risk, makes an investment, commits extra effort, and finds a better solution to an economic problem and thereby creates wealth, that person has a right to the lion's share of the economic benefits that those actions create.

The fruit of economic activity is not owned collectively but owned by the individual or company that creates the wealth. That is not to say that wealth creators have no responsibility to others in society. We all acknowledge that we have wider responsibilities. Overwhelmingly, people who are responsible for wealth creation recognise those responsibilities. Tax policy must recognise that the first call on the wealth created by the people who work in our economy falls with the people who are responsible for that creation process.

We believe also that tax policies must recognise another and parallel principle—that the limiting of the tax burden, particularly the marginal incidence rate, is right not only in principle but in practice, for a severely utilitarian reason. Any economy relies for success on people taking risks, making investments, committing extra effort, and solving economic problems. That is the engine that drives the wealth-creation process. It is powerfully in the interests of the whole community to maximise incentives, encourage people to engage in that process, make those activities worth while, encourage people to undertake them, and —most important of all—reward those who do so successfully.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): In that case, why did the tax burden increase under the Conservatives in the 1980s? It was higher in the 1980s than ever it was in the 1970s.

Mr. Dorrell: I am seeking to set out clearly why it is important to limit the tax burden and marginal rates of tax. I am not making a call to arms in defence of privilege.

[Mr. Dorrell]

My comments reflect clear recognition that we have a common interest in rewarding success. The individuals responsible for wealth-creating activity benefit, as they have every right to do. More importantly, the whole community benefits if, as a result of that more incentive-oriented approach, the economy becomes more successful.

We have the clearest possible illustration of that principle in the take home pay since 1979 of the man on average earnings. I am talking not about someone on a fancy City commission but about a man on average earnings. Between 1974 and 1979, his average take-home pay rose 1 per cent. in real terms. Since 1979, that same man has seen his take-home pay rise 39 per cent. in real terms—£78 a week in today's terms. That is a measure of the effectiveness of a more successful economy driven by the incentive approach that this Government adopt.

Virtually all the Opposition parties fail to grasp that common interest in rewarding success. In the Ways and Means debate three weeks ago, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) illustrated the extent to which the Liberal Democrats do not understand that essential principle. He asked what he thought was a rhetorical question—what good it was to a man on disability allowance to talk about tax cuts. It does not seem to occur to the hon. Member for Gordon, any more than to his party, that the money that pays for disability allowances is generated by a successful economy driven by effective rewards and incentives.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Surely the Financial Secretary will concede that, if the wages at the top of the scale rise by substantially more than inflation, that will pull up the average. Will the hon. Gentleman remind me what the average male weekly wage now is? I suspect that many of my constituents receive nothing like that amount.

Mr. Dorrell: Average male earnings are now just under £400 a week. That in itself reflects the increase in earnings brought about by the more successful economic policies introduced in the 1980s. Failure to understand the critical importance of the incentives that lie at the heart of a free economy explains the choice with which the electorate were presented on 9 April.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Would it not be a more accurate analysis to say that, in the general election, the majority voted for parties that believed that, in the current economic circumstances, there was some scope for greater investment rather than tax cuts? Would not even more have done so if they had not taken fright at the last moment, seeing the possibility that Labour's ambitions for tax increases were far greater?

Mr. Dorrell: No, I think that what frightened them was the prospect of Labour and the hon. Gentleman's party entering into a cosy pact that would deliver proportional representation.

What the electorate saw on offer from Labour during the general election campaign was a programme that would add £7 billion to the tax burden, and would bring back 59 per cent. marginal tax rates for wealth creators. For the Liberal Democrats—the party of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)—even that was not enough; according to them, an across-the-board tax increase was needed to pay for the party's social programmes. The electorate saw the choice with which they were faced, understood its implications clearly and chose the Government's vision. I believe that they were absolutely right to do so.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The Financial Secretary has referred to incentives. He has also mentioned 59 per cent. tax rates, which—obviously—he rejects. Does he accept, however, that many people at the bottom of the scale—those on housing and poll tax benefits—may face effective tax rates of up to 98 per cent. if they have a chance to go out and earn money? Benefits are withdrawn, and tax comes in. The Government's council tax proposals increase the disincentives and the effective tax rates for such people.

Mr. Dorrell: I was about to observe that one of the changes introduced by the Government in earlier years ensured that no one had to pay marginal tax, combined with benefit withdrawal, of more than 100 per cent. That system operated before the Government started to reform the taxation of income.

In particular, on 9 April, the electorate chose the Budget delivered by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 10 March rather than the shadow Budget delivered with such ceremony by the leader-in-waiting of the Labour party. Our Budget continued the process of reform and reduction of taxes that has been the hallmark of 13 years of Conservative government. My right hon. Friend cut income tax to 20p on the first £2,000 of everyone's taxable income, and 20p is now the marginal rate for nearly 4 million people. In doing so, he reaffirmed his pledge to move towards a 20p basic rate for all taxpayers as soon it was prudent to do so.

My right hon. Friend's Budget was not a quick election gimmick; it built on earlier reforms, one of which the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) has just drawn to our attention. The Social Security Act 1986 ended the anomaly of marginal withdrawal rates of over 100 per cent., and the national insurance reform of 1989 ended the notorious national insurance "steps". The Budget follows the reduction in the basic rate of income tax from 33 per cent. to 25 per cent. in a number of steps, every one of which was opposed by the Opposition—although they asked the electorate to believe on 9 April that, having voted against it, they now considered that 20 per cent. was the right income tax rate.

The Budget also follows measures that we have taken at the higher end of the income scale to improve incentives. We have reduced the top rate of income tax from 83 per cent. to 40 per cent.; we have abolished the investment income surcharge of 15 per cent.; and we have reduced the top rate of inheritance tax from 75 per cent. to 40 per cent. Those changes are all of a piece, and they represent the Government's continuing commitment to reducing the tax burden, sharpening incentives and, above all, rewarding success.

Tax cuts, however, cannot be had for nothing. Only a Government who are committed to controlling public expenditure will have the capacity to cut tax. The history of the 1960s and 1970s is one of unrelenting growth in the proportion of gross domestic product represented by public expenditure. In 1964, the outgoing Conservative Government bequeathed a public expenditure share of

GDP of 36·75 per cent. By the mid-1970s, that share had risen to only a fraction under 50 per cent.: half the total national income was being spent by the Government.

It was at that point that Dr. Witteveen—my hon. Friends will remember him—arrived to bail out a bankrupt Government. Under his tutelage, Labour imposed the only real-terms cut in NHS expenditure in recent history—yet, despite the U-turn imposed by its bankers, public expenditure still stood at 44 per cent. of GDP when Labour left office in 1979.

The present Government have brought firmly under control the share of national income accounted for by public expenditure. At the top of the economic cycle, the share was some 4 per cent. lower than it had been at the peak of the previous cycle; in the current recession, the share is likely to peak at 43 per cent., compared with a peak of 47 per cent. in the early 1980s and—as I have said—one of a fraction under 50 per cent. in the mid-1970s.

I have stressed the emphasis that we place on controlling the tax burden. Disciplined control of public expenditure is the inevitable and inescapable corollary of that commitment. One change announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget will serve further to underline the critical importance of the umbilical cord that should connect tax and expenditure decisions. Next year will be the last year in which a Finance Bill debate is held in the summer: in December 1993, we shall switch to an annual Budget statement that will cover both revenue and expenditure.

That change will improve decision-making in government. It will mean that decisions on spending and decisions on tax can be made alongside each other, that all the Government's activities can be viewed in the round and that it can be decided properly whether a given objective would be better met by means of the public-expenditure or the tax route.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Obviously, we all welcome what the Financial Secretary has just said. Will he tell us, however, just how definite the figures produced in December will be in terms of the actual Budget? Will what is announced then be just a plan, or will a decision be made at that time?

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend made the position clear in his Budget statement. The December Budget, as its name implies, is intended to bring together expenditure and revenue in a firm Budget statement.

The change will also improve accountability. The presentation of the Government's plans will be easier to understand. Parliament and the public will be able to look at both sides of the account, to see what the Government plan to spend and how they propose to pay for their spending. Parliament and the public will be able to debate the choices that the Government have made. The new system will make crystal clear what the voters recognised on 9 April: that only a Government with the will and desire to control public expenditure can genuinely offer the prospect of lower taxation.

There are other benefits too, not least for employers. They are responsible for operating the PAYE system, and it falls to them to ensure that Budget changes in income tax rates and allowances are passed on to their employees. The current Budget timetable means that the Inland Revenue must update employees' tax codes for the new tax year in two stages, in order to put the benefit of tax reductions into pay packets as soon as possible after the start of the tax year. That often means that an employee's tax code is changed twice in a year, causing extra work for the employer and, in an annual cycle, correspondence for Members of Parliament.

With a December Budget, the Revenue's two annual coding exercises will be combined. The recoding will take place in one exercise before the tax year starts. Inevitably, there will be some transitional costs for employers in switching to the new system, but when it is in place it will mean less work for them and for the Inland Revenue. For taxpayers, it will mean that tax cuts will normally be in pay packets immediately after the start of the tax year instead of late in May, as at present.

The Bill picks up those measures that did not need to be on the statute book before the election. With two exceptions, they will take effect from the dates announced in the Budget. The exceptions are the measures to reduce the minimum limit for charitable donations qualifying for tax relief under the gift aid scheme and the relaxation of the rules for some charitable convenants. As my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General announced to the House on 7 May, we now propose to bring forward the starting date for these measures from 1 July to 7 May. That will be of considerable benefit to both charities and donors.

On 6 April, the threshold for inheritance tax was raised from £140,000 to £147,000, in line with indexation. The Bill implements the over-indexation to £150,000 announced in the Budget. That starts the process that we promised in our manifesto of lessening the burden of inheritance tax on families whose principal asset is the family home. But the Budget contained a measure of wider significance, a measure that has been widely welcomed.

Those who build up their own firm are often fearful of the threat that inheritance tax poses to the long-term future of their business. They are concerned that their heirs will face a large inheritance tax bill and that, to pay the bill, those heirs will have to take funds out of the business that could be better used to make the business grow. Worse still, they may have to sell up, as a result of which the business would no longer be a family business.

We do not believe in a one-generation enterprise society. We believe that people are right to want to pass on the results of their efforts to the next generation. If Parliament approves the Bill, the threat of inheritance tax to family firms will be removed.

The inheritance tax change was one element of a wider series of measures designed to benefit business. The changes to value added tax penalties were enacted in the Act that the House passed just before the election. The changes to the business rate in England and Wales will be implemented through the Bill that the House is to debate later today. Adjusted rates bills will be issued for 650,000 English and Welsh properties later this summer, whereas 250,000 properties in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where no legislation was needed, have already received their bills. We are introducing rules for hearing tax appeals, which include powers to award costs and publish decisions.

The amount that we can or should do through the tax system to help businesses is, however, necessarily limited. What matters most to all businesses is the overall economic condition of the country and the availability of opportunities for trading at a profit. The 1990s promise to be a decade of increasing opportunity for business. It will certainly be our purpose to ensure that that is so.

[Mr. Dorrell]

The 1990s will be the first decade of the European single market. It is perhaps fitting that a substantial part of the Bill is taken up with the measures needed to administer the tax system once fiscal controls at frontiers are abolished on 1 January 1993.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The Minister keeps on talking about opportunities, tax gains and the rest of it. Will he take this opportunity to refer to a subject that was not referred to in the Queen's Speech: unemployment? What opportunities will there be for unemployed people? The unemployment figures increase month by month. Many people fear that they will never work again. When will unemployment be at anywhere near the same level as it was when the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam), then a junior Labour Minister, was in office?

Mr. Dorrell: Has it not occurred to the hon. Gentleman that the building of a successful and expanding economy is the necessary precondition for the delivery of a reduction in unemployment? The hon. Gentleman ought to concentrate for one second on the success we achieved in job creation and reducing unemployment throughout the 1980s. In that decade, more than half of all the jobs created in Europe were created in this country. The abolition of unnecessary frontier controls represents a major advance towards the Government's objective of a free and competitive market of 350 million consumers in Europe. That in itself provides an opportunity to create the jobs that the hon. Gentleman very properly wants to see created but for whose creation he makes no proposals.

The scale of the internal market in Europe should not be underestimated. It is worth reflecting that the European Community will be further advanced in the removal of internal barriers to trade than some federations. For example, the Canadian Prime Minister, a mere 125 years after the foundation of the Canadian federation, has set himself the objective of reducing the current inter-provincial barriers to trade so as to create an internal market in Canada that will parallel the market that we are seeking to build in Europe. The completion of the internal market in Europe represents a substantial achievement for the Community, as well as a major trading opportunity for British business.

In contemplating the opportunities presented by the single market, we should also reflect on how far we have come since we joined the European Community roughly 20 years ago. In those days, there was a fear that opening up the European market could spell economic destruction for a weak and fragile economy. Who, after all, we were asked, would want to invest in an economy that was inflation-prone, strike-bound, with a name for poor productivity and poor quality, where enterprise and initiative were throttled by a penal tax system?

In the 1970s, the British economy looked destined to falter. The prospect of freer markets was a threat, not an opportunity—a threat to those who feared that it would spell the end to a cocooned and mollycoddled existence. The fact that Britain is now the investment location of choice for those who want to take full advantage of the single market is one of the most concrete testimonies to the achievements of the last 13 years. The United Kingdom has recently been attracting half of all American investment——

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The Minister has talked about the opportunities presented to the British economy by the European single market, but is it not the case that the Government's unrelenting opposition to the social chapter means that the opportunity offered to the British economy is for it to become the sweatshop of Europe?

Mr. Dorrell: No. It is the opportunity described by Mr. Delors—of becoming the most attractive investment opportunity for business in Europe. That is the choice that business is making.

As I was saying, half of all American investment coming into the Community and just under half of all Japanese investment in the Community now comes to Britain. Britain offers a low tax environment, with corporation tax in the current year at 33 per cent. and with a top rate of income tax at 40 per cent. This country offers good labour relations and stability.

On 9 April, the British people were offered a choice. They chose the policies of low taxation that give individuals freedom to chose how they spend their own money, that give businessess an environment in which they can grow and invest. They rejected the prospect of a wealth-destroying, high-tax economy and of an environment hostile to enterprise, investment and growth. They realised, as we realise, that that offers no future to Britain. I commend the Bill to the House.

4.58 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I must confess that I never recognised either myself or my party during the speech to which the Financial Secretary treated the House. However, I agree with him that what matters to business is the overall economic condition of the country.

The House will want to consider the Bill in the context of the present state of the British economy, in particular in the context of the budgetary stance that these measures are supposed to underpin. For example, there is nothing in the Bill that will have a significant impact on Britain's trade deficit, yet the position is both serious and deteriorating. April's deficit was an alarming £1·061 billion. In the last three months, the volume of imports has risen by 6 per cent., but the volume of exports has risen by only 2 per cent. The manufacturing deficit for the last three months is nearly twice what it was in the same period in the previous year. Before 1983, Britain never had a manufacturing deficit. Since then, we have never had a surplus.

I know that there are some in the Conservative party who argue that those things do not matter, that they are all private sector arrangements that can be left to find their own level. That view is not universally held within the Conservative party. Let me treat the House to an extract from a speech made to the Conservative party conference in 1989, not by the man who is now our Prime Minister, but by the man who is now our President. He said:

> "I beg our party not to argue that a deficit in overseas trade is of incidental importance, self-correcting, easily financed. I don't believe a word of it."

I bet he delivered this speech better than me. He went on:

"We would never have let the Labour Party get away with such an argument."

He certainly delivered that better than me.

"Tell the small shopkeeper that he can trade at a loss and he'll recognise the sound of socialist naivety. Ask any housewife how long she can feed the family on tick."

There was a time when it was unnecessary to say to Conservative party audiences, even rhetorically, that they should "ask any housewife", because they would have been all too acutely aware of the views of one specific housewife.

Britain's second most famous housewife made clear her views on trade deficits:

"Imports have penetrated our home market deeper than we could ever have imagined . . . the Conservatives are on your side. We are going to let you who know the job get on with it . . . so that once again the products stream from our factories and workshops while customers of the world scramble over each other to buy them."

That was in April 1979. Far from having customers from all over the world scrambling to buy the products streaming from our factories and workshops, we have maintained a constant manufacturing deficit since 1983. Britain is now the only EC country where manufacturing investment is lower than in 1979.

Those issues would be important at any time, but to have such a weak balance of payments position at this stage of the economic cycle suggests that something is deeply and fundamentally wrong with the management of the British economy. The disgraceful truth is that there is nothing in the Bill to have any impact on the problem.

What of inflation? In 1987, in the Conservative party manifesto, which was supposed to set the tone for the last Parliament, the Conservatives attacked inflation in the only way they know how—by using extravagant language:

"Inflation is an evil . . . as with all cancers, it needs to be completely eradicated. To this end, we shall endeavour to achieve zero inflation."

To put that hysteria into context, the manifesto goes on:

"We shall maintain strict control of public expenditure and borrowing"—

oh, yes.

The Conservatives' method of bearing down on inflation when they periodically feel obliged to do so, is to create a recession and put others out of work. Inflation was running at 10·9 per cent. in September 1990. Our country, under the management of the Conservative party, has sustained seven successive quarters of negative economic growth and 25 consecutive months of rising unemployment. At the end of all that pain and misery, the underlying rate of inflation—that is the Conservative party's preferred measurement—is still 5·7 per cent.

The Budget and the Finance Bill are predicated on optimistic Government forecasts of economic growth. No one else seems to share the Government's optimism. In a devastating survey of informed opinion, the *Financial Times* told us last Thursday that

"Economists predict growth will remain weak."

It goes on:

"Economic growth in the UK will continue to crawl along at a weak level for the rest of this year and next, according to the latest *Financial Times* survey of forecasts on the UK economy . . . Economists expect gross domestic product to grow 0·8 per cent. this year. Even next year, GDP growth will not quite recover to the so-called 'trend' rate of about 2·5 per cent . . . The consensus from economists at 22 universities, intergovernmental institutions, independent think-tanks and City investment houses is that unemployment will continue to grow over the next two years, rising to 2·75 million by the end of this year and to just under 3 million by the end of next . . . Projections for output this year are particularly gloomy . . . Investment is forecast to fall substantially this year . . . Forecasters do not expect inflation to wither greatly from present levels . . . The United Kingdom's trade deficit remains a big concern. Nearly all the economists surveyed predict a worse current account balance this year than the £6·5 billion deficit projected by the Treasury in the March budget—the consensus is for a deficit of £8·4 billion—but their forecasts might be too benign . . . The average forecasts do not suggest that Britain will be able to cut its interest rates below German rates."

That is a devastating indictment of the Government's management of the economy. It leaves us with sluggish economic growth, grotesquely optimistic medium-term Government economic forecasts, a weakened tax base and a public sector borrowing requirement that has more to do with political expediency than prudent economic management.

The Government have set out their objectives as reducing the share of national income taken by the public sector, balancing the budget over the medium term and reducing taxes when it is prudent to do so. In the present circumstances, any significant tax reduction seems unobtainable, even in the medium term. Even the objective of a balanced budget over the cycle is receding as the Government's growth forecasts look ever more ridiculous.

It seems logical to conclude that, with considerations of electoral expediency out of the way, the Government's Treasury team will be looking at two main and not mutually exclusive options. First, this year's public spending round will be draconian, and what has already been promised is probably even now being clawed back. Secondly—it is here that Finance Bill Committee members will need to be particularly vigilant—the Government will be looking for ways of getting the total tax take from the British economy back up to around 38 per cent.

I am prepared to give way to the Financial Secretary if he wishes to repudiate that. The Government will want to use indirect taxation as the mechanism. The Financial Secretary almost confirmed as much during our last debate on these matters. The option of broadening the scope of value added tax and blaming the European Community sounds par for the course, given the Government's recidivist record on tax matters. The Committee will need to be alert to that.

The state of public finances underpinning the Finance Bill is worse than it appears, since the Government have had the accumulated advantage of £109 billion of North sea oil revenues, £40 billion of privatisation receipts and a further £25 billion from the sale of council houses.

Moving from one sorry state of affairs to the next, there is nothing in the Finance Bill to underpin the classless society to which the Prime Minister said that he is committed. When asked on "Election Call" about the widening income gap between the rich and poor, the Chancellor simply said,

"I don't believe it has."

Yet, in its family expenditure survey, a survey of real families, the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that the poorest 10 per cent. of the population lost £52 a year on average as a result of Conservative tax and benefit policies from 1979 to 1992. One of the explanations it gives for that is that

"VAT increases have hit the poor, who have not been compensated by cuts in direct taxes because they do not pay them."

Over the same period, the richest 10 per cent. of the population gained £4,524 a year on average, yet the

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

Chancellor said that he does not believe that the income gap has widened, as if these were matters of faith rather than statistical fact.

One of the ways in which the unfairness of the tax burden could be addressed is through the mechanism of inheritance tax. In its latest survey of Britain's 300 wealthiest people, *The Sunday Times* said that 155 of the 300 surveyed inherited what it called "serious money". We are told that most of Britain's dukes and earls somehow manage to hang on to their wealth through boom and bust. How can it be fair or just for one young man of 28 to be worth £67 million because of the success of an ancestor eight generations ago in the 18th century?

I believe that it is right that a successful person who has built up money for himself should be able to hand that on to his children and to his children's children, but should it be untouched by the tax system for eight generations? When does the tax system take its cut?

Mr. Dorrell: How many generations?

Mr. Brown: For how many generations does the Financial Secretary think it right for these great fortunes to go from father to son, or perhaps occasionally to daughter, without the tax system taking its cut? Does he think that that is right or morally justifiable?

Mr. Dorrell: I thought that I had made it clear that it is more important for society to encourage successful businesses and to give them the wherewithal to continue to invest in expansion and in the job creation process that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) was worried about.

Mr. Brown: I am not quarrelling with the Financial Secretary about setting the parameters for successful businesses: I am talking about the tax take from inherited wealth, which is different. The young gentleman I am referring to is not a successful business man, and nor, no doubt, was his father. They were the beneficiaries of a substantial sum of money that they inherited from an ancestor who was successful in the economic conditions of the 18th century.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): If the hon. Gentleman supports the Government's changes to estate duty or inheritance tax on businesses, why did the Labour Government have a rate of 70 per cent.? Does he now accept that that was a mistake?

Mr. Brown: We are discussing two different things. I have not stated a view on the Bill's clauses, which we shall trawl in detail in Committee. I am talking about the principle of inheritance tax as a mechanism whereby the taxpayer can take a bite from the great accumulated fortunes that seem to be able to drift almost in perpetuity from generation to generation of this country's wealthiest families.

The position is made all the more stark by the fact that the poorest 10 per cent. of households have an annual income of £4,081, of which they must pay 45 per cent. in different taxes. Income tax accounts for only £40—not because they are rich, are professionally advised or are related to the royal family and do not pay tax but because they are too poor to fall into the income tax system. All, almost all, of that 45 per cent. is spent on indirect taxes.

How can we place an effective tax burden of 45 per cent. on the poorest, whereas the wealthiest seem to be able to keep great fortunes rolling through the generations without paying tax, let alone a tax take of 45 per cent.? It cannot be morally right that the tax system should deal so harshly with the very poorest yet so generously with the very rich. A Government who believed in a classless society would favour redistributing the burden. Needless to say, that is not the thrust of the Bill's inheritance tax proposals.

The victims of the Government's recession are the unemployed, who are not spread evenly throughout Britain. The Government justify their neglect of the disadvantaged by claiming the growth in the level of take-home earnings as a big achievement—the Tory party's "big idea". That argument was trawled in our debate on 14 May, and the Financial Secretary returned to it today. As it is one of the issues that divides the two main parties, we shall return to it again.

In the debate on 14 May, the Financial Secretary emphasised the importance that the Government attached to what he called

"an effective system of rewards for those who take risks and commit themselves to extra effort".—[*Official Report*, 14 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 810.]

That was the tenor of his remarks this afternoon. He cited figures showing the growth in real take-home pay for the person on average earnings. If it is the Conservative's big idea that the take-home pay of those on average earnings grows rapidly under Conservative Governments, the Financial Secretary will be disappointed to learn that his big idea has stalled.

In 1991, there was a 0·5 per cent. fall in real disposable incomes, due largely to the recession. No doubt the Financial Secretary will have his plans for the Government's big idea, but they will not fit happily with the other parameters for the management of the economy, in particular the Government's difficulties with the tax take. The victims of the recession are not the employed but the unemployed. It is not employed people who are carrying the burden of the famous price worth paying.

With unemployment standing at 2,695,000—9·5 per cent. of the work force—with 23 unemployed people chasing every vacancy, with 1·5 million more of our fellow citizens unemployed now than when Labour left office, and with the number of people unemployed for more than a year standing at 841,000—a shameful increase of 94,000 in the first quarter of this year—the truth is that the Government not only do not care but, on the evidence of the Bill, no longer feel obliged to pretend to care.

The Conservative party, its owners and its newspapers will tell any story to save jobs—not the jobs of their fellow citizens and not the employment base of the country that they are supposed to be governing, but the only jobs that Conservative politicians care about: their own and those of their friends.

5.15 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): The debate was initiated with a spirited speech from my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary, who argued the virtues of reducing income tax in such robust terms that it reminded me of Gladstone's dictum about eschewing taxation and, rather, allowing money to fructify in the pockets of the people. My hon. Friend gave a formidable performance and has

moved some way from the Tory Reform Group. That shows what a short time in the Treasury does, even to a good man.

I give my warmest support to the Bill, which seeks to raise the minimum revenue that is needed for the conduct of our affairs over the next 12 months. Treasury Ministers are engaged in an exercise that is bound to cause increasing difficulty as they try to reconcile their fiscal, public spending and monetary objectives. I shall try to explain why—but briefly.

I accept that the Bill raises the minimum revenue that is required, but it sits alongside substantial public spending. I see my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary in his place, and I wish him well in the formidable task, which is well within his capabilities, of disciplining all the spending Departments in the coming weeks; but I do not believe that the level of public spending more than incidentally reflects the swing of the recession.

Of course the swing of the recession is an element in that public spending, but underlying the present levels of public spending is the continuous thrust for more money on health, on social services and education. I do not believe that those imperatives will be reversed merely because there has been a general election. We must reconcile ourselves to high public spending for the immediate future. Even if there is recovery in the economy, I suspect that unemployment will be the last element to show a fall. Therefore, when we are talking about its fiscal consequences, I still believe that the economy can recover while public spending is high.

However, many hon. Members will reflect from anecdotal experiences in their constituencies that the revival in the economy is, in most generous terms, tentative. More fledgling swallows have flown in to proclaim the recovery since the general election but have now reversed direction and gone to Italy. I do not regard that as a condemnation of Government policy. I do not feel any enthusiasm about a speedy and accelerating rate of recovery. There is much to be said for the recovery being well based and progressive in that sense.

All the anecdotal evidence I have been given is of an economy still in a state of uncertainty and unease. In those circumstances, I should have expected just a bit of imagination and some attempt to deal with interest rates. It is perfectly true that, since the historic occasion when we entered the Lubyanka of the exchange rate mechanism, interest rates have fallen, but the rates of inflation have fallen faster. In real terms, interest rates today are at an extraordinary level, especially when one traces our general state of economic activity.

I am not going to make forecasts, as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) did so persuasively with the aid of *The Sunday Times*—Murdoch and the Labour party, a dream ticket. However, I do not believe that we can sensibly have a balanced, interrelated economic policy without a reduction in interest rates.

At the weekend, commentators were saying that the exchange rate mechanism was the nearest we had to the gold standard of the inter-war years, and that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was almost like Montagu Norman in lederhosen. The immediate prospect does not appeal. It is perfectly possible to reduce interest rates without causing disaster within membership of the exchange rate mechanism, although I grant at once that there is more than one opinion about such a relationship.

It is just possible that, as a result of a movement of interest rates, the present exchange rate could not be maintained. Would it be a national disaster if there was some adjustment in the present exchange rate? I do not know what the correct rate is. I am a market person by instinct and by prejudice, and I prefer a free exchange rate to a politically fixed one. Do my hon. Friends agree with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade that when, month after month and quarter after quarter, there is a deficit of the recent recorded magnitude on the current trade account, it tells us that all is well with the world? Or does it tell us that the exchange rate and all that it represents is possibly being balanced round a slightly suspect figure? I do not know. I do know that one cannot carry out a policy with the three major economic components in their present relationship.

I have an affection for the Treasury, although I know that it is full of the most lofty and intellectually well equipped individuals, who never stray too far into the real world. I have a little friendly advice. My right hon. Friends the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary or my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary should take those individuals to one side over a fraternal lunch. They should explain to them the old seaside business of the three-card trick, because they have probably never played anything with cards except bridge.

It would be helpful to explain the three-card trick to show that, if one is conducting economic policy, one cannot have a fiscal policy, a spending policy and a borrowing policy, with all that relates to a monetary policy, unless there is a possibility of flexible interrelationships. Once one freezes one of them, there are deleterious consequences across the board. That is the position I see emerging. I say to my hon. Friends that, if one has such a difficulty, one addresses it in year one of a Parliament—because the longer one goes on, the more difficult it becomes.

5.23 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): As always, it is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). It was he who correctly predicted a number of years ago, when the Government's economic policy was first revealed to us, that we faced three years of unparalleled austerity. Those three years were somewhat similar to the present. I had hoped that other Conservative Members would have pointed out what was fairly obvious to us all.

The levels of interest rates and the determination to keep inflation down, which the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North correctly mentioned, overhang the Bill. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that the central economic aim is to get inflation down and to keep it down. Yet the Government said that 13 years ago, and we suffered for three years to bring that about. We now hear the same hopes and aspirations which were produced so long ago.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer now talks about 2 per cent. inflation, and there is even the odd mention of zero inflation in the years to come. Who in the present Government will be straightforward, as the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North was, and point out the consequences of those unrealistic aims? We face the problem of real interest rates being ridiculously high and damaging our industry. We face levels of inflation which

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

will damage industry as well, and we face a balance of payments deficit with its consequent problems if we do nothing about our exchange rate.

The true level of inflation is 5·7 per cent, the underlying rate, yet we must get that down to 2 per cent. We shall not be able to compete with the Germans indefinitely, because we need to achieve levels of inflation lower than those in Germany to make our exchange rate realistic. It has taken the French a number of years to achieve that, yet people still do not have the confidence in the French franc which they have in the deutschmark, so one must maintain the unrealistic policy for even longer than the French have.

In 1979, the Government were confident that they had the right solution. They believed that sterling M3 would produce the recovery and they reduced public expenditure a great deal. Once again, the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North was quite right. Public expenditure will not be reduced as heavily now because they are more or less at the minimum. We should consider the level of public provision in this country, the way in which we are still living off our capital and the fact that our standard of roads and of housing is still declining.

Some 13 years ago, I lost 30 per cent. of the firms in my constituency which went to the wall as a result of the Government's severe actions. We are losing many firms today although it is too early to know exactly how many we shall lose. Is the goal of reducing inflation to 2 per cent. realistic? To achieve that, we shall need a further level of deflation, with unemployment rising indefinitely into the future, with investment falling and with increasing misery as the Government pursue the one goal in which they believe.

We all know that it is easy to reduce inflation, and to deflate the economy by high interest rates and, for good measure, by high exchange rates. That reduces consumption and destroys companies, the good as well as the bad, indiscriminately. Exports are hard to get with a high exchange rate and imports take advantage of the position to compete with our industries. Inflation then comes down. High interest rates restrict spending, although not all forms of spending. Individuals with high levels of saving profit from such a situation.

The question that must worry us is what happens eventually when there is an upturn. What happens then to our balance of payments? We expect a £9 billion deficit, at an annual rate, for the first half of next year. That may continue throughout next year, with high unemployment and with a bad level of investment, and possibly throughout the year after.

Where are the exports coming from? The manufacturers have been badly damaged by the Government who give them little consideration and less assistance. The problem is compounded. Many on the Treasury Bench said a couple of years ago that the boom was investment-led; it was not—it was a consumption-led boom. The boom was in finance, credit and consumption, and that did not help our long-term trading performance. The trouble with relying on interest rates is that some people gain and some people lose.

It is harder to control the economy through interest rates alone now that so many people have such a large amount of collateral in their homes. A further problem is that the Government created the conditions in which the home was seen as an investment. Trading up to bigger and better homes was considered to be the best investment of all. However, housing is not an investment. It is a consumption and it is a necessary consumption with regard to modest homes, although it is an extravagant consumption in certain other cases.

It is quite reasonable, sensible and right to help people to achieve modest levels of housing. We should provide incentives for that. However, to subsidise through mortgage tax relief, the abolition of schedule A, capital gains tax and capital transfer tax and to spend £8 billion on that, is profligacy of a massive order.

Although there is no question that all Governments are to blame, this Tory Government are the worst. After 13 years, the people of this country have learnt to penny-pinch in everything else, but to be spendthrifts in housing. We are now paying the penalty for having such a level of home ownership fuelled and ignited by the former Prime Minister's dedication to absurdly lavish incentives to home ownership. The country has paid a terrible price for reducing inflation by a means that caused great uneccessary damage to our economy.

We must look to the future. Many people saw the difference between providing advantages for the City of London and providing advantages to manufacturing industry. The trouble is that the Government did not see that important distinction. Of course we benefit from the City of London and its financial operations. However, we do not benefit from it anything like as much as we can benefit from manufacturing industry which produces exports.

So many people are only dimly beginning to perceive that financial centres follow wealth creation which comes mainly from manufacturing. London became a financial centre because of our industry in the last century. New York became a financial centre because of United States industry. Similarly, Tokyo is becoming a financial centre as a result of Japanese industry, and Frankfurt is becoming a financial centre because of West German industry.

While 10 or 20 years ago it was inconceivable that a European financial centre could be anywhere but in London, as time passes it becomes harder to be certain that such a financial centre will be located in our capital city. Our financial centre rose on the banks of Manchester cotton and Birmingham metal industries. However, it now relies on the expertise of people in financial institutions. That expertise is tradeable. It can be acquired and removed. Those people can travel abroad and establish similar institutions in other countries.

The lesson is that manufacturing industry is the principal begetter of financial institutions. Therefore, we shall have to return to manufacturing industry. There was an opportunity in the Finance Bill to make capital allowances helpful to manufacturing industry instead of the reverse—as is so often the case.

I repeat what I have said on several occasions. A manufacturing company might buy a machine tool for £1,000. However, at the end of one year, that is written down to only £750. The £250 difference may very often be the salesman's commission. The machine tool could not be sold for £750. That is not depreciation. In effect, there is a tax on that machine tool because the true depreciation suffered by the purchaser will not be allowed back to him. That must be nonsense. Sooner or later I hope that the

Inland Revenue and the Government will see sense and restore capital allowances to something more approaching their true value.

5.34 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) was correct when he said that this autumn's public spending round was going to be tough. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury should be aware that there will be much support on the Back Benches for curbing high spending Ministries. It is vital this year that public sector pay should set an example and is not settled at rates higher than in the private sector.

It is significant that the first Finance Bill of this Parliament continues the radical reform of our tax system started by Mrs. Thatcher's Government and which was aimed at creating an enterprise culture in Britain. In that respect, clause 59 is the most important clause in the Bill.

In the 1970s, this country had one of the smallest small business sectors in Europe. The reason for that was obvious. During the 1970s, socialist Governments did not like private enterprise. Clause 4, massive nationalisation, enormous burdens of bureaucracy and high taxation were heaped on small businesses. Profit was a dirty word. Any business that survived, prospered and expanded faced the prospect that once it grew beyond a certain size, it was unlikely to be passed on to the younger generation because of the burden of estate duties. The nonsense was that the more successful the business the more it was likely to be sold to pay those penal taxes.

Quite naturally, owners tried to avoid that tax by giving away their shares to the next generation while they were still alive. The Labour party decided to stop that. Labour did away with estate duty and introduced capital transfer tax. That was economic madness for our country. We were killing off our industrial and commercial seedcorn. Some of yesterday's smaller firms are today's medium-sized firms and some of today's medium-sized firms will be tomorrow's industrial giants. The new tax also had a devastating effect on our regions.

Estate duty and capital transfer tax saw the end of many of our great northern firms which were controlled by northern families. When they sold out, they inevitably sold to national or international companies. The head offices were moved from the provincial city to London, and with them often went the finance, sales and research and development departments. That left the provincial cities more and more as branch factory land.

There are numerous examples of that in Hull in my constituency. Our leading departmental store, which was run by the Powell family for years, had to be sold to pay estate duties. Who benefited from that? The town did not benefit, because the profits were spent and invested in Hull when that department store was a private company. The customers did not benefit because they no longer received the service or choice that they received before. They had to have what head office in London said that the store should sell. The employees did not benefit. If there was a problem, they could no longer walk through the door of the boss's office to discuss it. They now worked for a faceless management in London.

The result of that policy had a broader effect on provincial society which I am sure the socialist ideologues who imposed the policy did not foresee. The family owners and directors nearly always provided the leadership in the community. They headed local charities and supported and financed sports clubs. They served as councillors and justices of the peace. As the family firms disappeared, the owners and directors disappeared as well. Even if the burden of capital transfer tax was not sufficient to force those businesses to sell out, it reduced the amount of cash available for investment and expansion.

In 1979, the Conservative Government realised that, if our economic decline was to be reversed, we needed to recreate the enterprise culture. We cannot create big firms. They are like oaks. One has to start with an acorn, and the acorns were the small businesses.

The great achievement of the Thatcher years was the enormous expansion in the establishment of small businesses and self-employment, helped by a much more supportive tax regime and lots of Government encouragement. Acorns grow into saplings before they become oaks. We defeat the object if half the saplings are cut down before they can grow into mature trees, and CTT was cutting them down.

The Government replaced CTT with inheritance tax. That was important because, once more, business men could give away their assets before they died, but that was not the solution. None of us knows when we will die. People die out of turn. It is dangerous to give away shares to the next generation—*[Interruption.]* Yes, we give them away, and people die out of turn and we get clobbered with tax. It is dangerous to give shares to the younger generation too soon because one is never sure which member of a family will go into a business. If money and power are given to young people too soon, it can cause family and social problems.

I am delighted that the Government have seen the validity of the arguments that have been put forward by the small business associations for some time and that clause 59 will now allow family businesses to be handed over free of tax to the next generation. This is an historic moment for small businesses. It will ensure their survival and expansion. It will be good for Britain, and it will be especially good for our regions and industry.

We hear much criticism of British industry having a short-term outlook. People say that industry is too worried about keeping the City happy and is reluctant to invest in the long term. Private family businesses do not have that problem. They can take a long view. They do not have to worry about the share price today or the price-earnings ratio tomorrow. They invest for the long term. The clause will be successful and will ensure that, over the next 15 years, we will have another harvest of great firms such as Marks and Spencer, Rolls-Royce and Sainsbury, which all started as family businesses.

As a Member who represents a large rural area, I am delighted that family farms will also benefit from the clause. In recent years, agriculture has been under increasing pressure, and the last thing that a farmer needs is the additional worry of how he will be able to hand over the family farm and ensure that his son can continue farming and pay his tax. If a farmer who has lost his father is struggling to survive, the last thing he wants is to have to sell vital fields to pay taxes.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has faced significant criticism over the past two years. I am sure that, as a result of clause 59, history will look kindly upon him. Without doubt, family farms and family firms will be ever

[Mr. John Townend]

grateful. I support the Bill with more enthusiasm than I have supported any Finance Bill since I have been in the House.

5.42 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) seemed to describe a small business and farming world quite different from the one that is out there at the moment. Clause 59 is undoubtedly welcomed by small business, and the related clauses are undoubtedly welcomed by farmers. However, far more of the small business men and farmers whom I meet these days are in no position to hand on substantial amounts of money: they have no great worries on that score. Their problem is to stay out of bankruptcy to keep their businesses afloat in what are proving to be very hostile economic times.

Many farmers are saying to their sons, "I am not sure whether you will be able to stay on the farm. I am not sure that there will be a living for you on the farm, even if I can hand it on to you." The hon. Gentleman should recognise that the world of small business is currently facing a number of more pressing problems than the one to which he referred, which undoubtedly affected business over many years in the way that he described.

Mr. Townend: We all accept that there are not large amounts of cash in small businesses, but surely the hon. Gentleman will accept that even a hard-pressed farm of 300 acres faces a serious inheritance tax problem which will be solved by the Government.

Mr. Beith: I agree. I supported the clauses and said, at the time of the Budget and since, that I would continue to do so. In the current climate, many farmers are saying to their sons, "You will have to think carefully before you even decide to keep the farm going, because I am not sure whether there is an income for the family now." But for the possession of a farmhouse and the ability to run a vehicle on the farm and so on, many farmers would be in a far better financial position if they gave up farming and went down the road to find a relatively poorly paid job, if one was available. It is as bad as that in many sectors of agriculture. It is not an argument against the new clauses: it is a point about the general climate.

The Financial Secretary was right to point out that the election featured the tax issue in a very significant way, but he drew rather strange conclusions from the figures. Perhaps because he was carried away by the fact that he is occupying an important position in the Government, he seemed to ignore the fact that, whereas 14 million people voted Conservative and therefore must be presumed to support the Budget, 11·5 million people voted Labour and 6 million voted Liberal Democrat. It is impossible to conclude from those figures that the majority of people weighed up the Budget and decided that what they wanted was the Budget presented by the Chancellor.

The Government won, by the rules of the system, enough seats to form a majority in the House and, under our system, that entitles them to be the Government. However, that does not suggest that the majority of people are convinced by the argument that, in the current circumstances, tax reduction is better than investment. Indeed, the figures suggest that the large majority of people voted for parties which, in different degrees, saw grounds for greater taxation in the current circumstances. We argued, for example, that depending on income tax to address the urgent problems of education was desirable. We found wide support for that argument.

It is also true that, in the latter days of the election campaign, fear arose among many people about what the real implications of the Labour party in government would be and what the real extent of its tax ambitions would be. That undoubtedly influenced voters at the later stages. It did not alter the basic figures or the fact that the majority of people voted against the Government, but it is clearly something that the Labour party will need to address.

I remain convinced that there is a substantial body of opinion—the majority, as reflected by the figures—which did not accept the Government's argument that they could go on attempting to reduce taxation even at the expense of essential public investment. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) hinted at that argument. There is a widespread feeling that there are key matters of investment with which we should get ahead now and which, if we do not get ahead with them, will hamper our economic growth.

If it makes sense, as the Secretary of State for the Environment said, to get into Canary Wharf while it is enormously good value, it must make sense to make some of the essential investments involving the construction industry while the construction industry can offer the most favourable terms while prices are at their lowest. Canary Wharf will remain pretty cheap for quite a long time to come. In the construction industry, prices may go up if we see some signs of recovery. At the moment, we think that it is extremely good value for that industry, and will put people back to work by doing some of the repairs, building and transport construction which is of real value for the future of our industry and economy.

It was part of our argument in the election that the Budget represented the wrong policy mix for accelerating the end of recession and was a missed opportunity to make some key public investments for which there is wide support. It was also part of our argument, and it is relevant to the Bill, that the Government's choice of tax-cutting measures was not going to address poverty in any significant way or put into people's hands sums of money that would make a significant difference to their purchasing power. One hundred pounds in the hands of an individual, as against £2 billion of public investment, seemed to be an odd choice to make at this stage of the economic cycle and unlikely to bring about serious improvement.

All the indicators have confirmed the impression, which was echoed on both sides of the House, of continuing recession problems—that is, our continuing output decline, unemployment continuing to rise, house prices and housing turnover continuing to fall, and gloomy reports from several companies. The chairman of Sainsbury said:

"I do not see any concrete signs of recovery."

The chairman of Marks and Spencer said that he saw

"no upturn in UK consumer spending."

Repossessions appear to be likely to continue, with the Government's scheme still not even off the ground, and the international environment is less favourable than ever to recovery because of the problems that we know exist in the German and Japanese economies. It would have made sense to move not to tax cuts but to investment.

This is a Bill of missed opportunities. For example, the Government have introduced no new provisions for tax relief on child care. Clearly, there is widespread public demand for such measures. Numerous Conservative Back-Bench Members keep talking about them. They did so in advance of the Budget, as if they were privy to secret information that the Budget would include great new provisions on child care. Year by year, those expectations are disappointed. We shall seek to raise the issue again in the context of this Finance Bill.

There is no sign in the Bill that the Government see the value of the tax system as something which can be used to support environmental objectives. Although the cut in car tax was welcome, the Government have missed the opportunity to use the tax system to promote environmental ends in relation to motor cars. The Bill does not vary car tax according to engine size or fuel efficiency. Nor does it do the same with other forms of vehicle taxation. Many other fiscal incentives could be used for environmental purposes. For example, corporation tax allowance could be made available for research and development into replacing CFCs. Changes in vehicle excise duty could also be used. There are several ways in which the system could be used for environmental purposes.

The Bill is also a missed opportunity to deal with poverty. There is no sign in the Bill of any move towards drawing together tax and benefits so that the low take-up of means-tested benefits ceases to contribute to poverty. The Government's tax changes are by no means the most efficient use of resources to help people on low incomes. If the Government are serious about targeting help on the poorest, they should drop the policy of concentrating spare resources on tax cuts via the expansion of the 20p band. Lifting the bottom of the tax band—lifting allowances—helps poorer people than those who are helped by lifting the top of the tax band. Simply expanding the 20p band will not be as effective as lifting the basic tax threshold.

The Government's particular choice of measures has brought with it considerable administrative costs. The cost of the extra staff required to administer the claims from people who had income taxed at source at the 25p rate but were liable to only the 20p rate will be considerable.

Before the election, I pressed the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury on the job implications. The *Financial Times* estimated that 800 new jobs would be required to administer the tax change. The then Chief Secretary said that he did not believe that the number of jobs required would be all that great. He gave a revised estimate later in the debate. He said:

"I understand that the Inland Revenue anticipates a need for up to 300 additional staff in the first year and possibly more in subsequent years, depending on the take-up rate." —[*Official Report*, 13 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 1134.]

In other words, "If people do not claim the tax rebate to which they are entitled, we might get away with not having to employ so many people." That is an odd way of dealing with the entitlements of the taxpayer. The change clearly involves considerable administrative costs, and I shall be interested to know whether the exact cost is now clearer.

Several measures could have been taken to reduce the bureaucratic burden on small businesses. For example, the continued separation of national insurance from income tax adds considerably to the administrative burden on small businesses. Small businesses have to contend with not merely the pay-as-you-earn system but national insurance contributions. If the two were integrated into a single system, there would be a considerable saving in costs to small businesses, as well as a saving on the £1·2 billion that the Government spend on administering the present system.

In Committee, we shall have to address increasing anxiety about the way in which small businesses are treated by the Inland Revenue. *The Sunday Times* has highlighted some of the interviews that take place in which taxpayers—especially small business taxpayers—are not fully advised of their rights and interviewed about their tax obligations but find that ignorance of their rights is presumed upon. Tax inspectors, often pressured by their training and the promotion system to take a rigorous attitude, put a great deal of pressure on taxpayers and give the impression that taxpayers are presumed to be guilty, when in law they must be presumed to be innocent.

There is an increasing file of cases, many of which have been brought to my attention, in which interviews seem to have been conducted in a hostile and unpleasant manner. In Committee, we shall need to inquire what is happening on that front and whether, for example, more details could be made public about the advice and training given to inspectors who carry out the work. They seem to be put under increasing pressure to achieve results by questionable means.

A measure which might have been included in the Bill, and which I was surprised not to find, was included in the Conservative manifesto. It is the proposal to exclude home owners from paying tax on the rent of rooms in their home. It is a good scheme, which closely echoes something in our manifesto at the previous election. It is a piece of borrowing that I would encourage and welcome.

If people have surplus capacity in their home, it seems a good idea to encourage them to make it available. It would be particularly helpful to young people with housing problems to relieve them of a tax burden. Often it is not only the tax burden that causes the problem. The problem is that people have to become involved in the tax system simply because they rent one room in their house for perhaps a limited period of a few years when they do not need it for their own family. It is a good idea to relieve them of that problem, and I would like to know from the Government what progress they intend to make on it.

The Government could also say more about stamp duty. When the stamp duty relief was announced, we all predicted that it would expire at just the time when signs of recovery in the housing market were too few to make it sensible to impose an additional burden at that point. Sure enough, that seems to be what has happened.

If there is one particularly unwelcome measure in the Bill, it is the third piece of retrospective legislation in respect of certain building societies. The Leeds building society has already been subjected to retrospective legislation. The retrospective proposals in the Bill appear to be designed to frustrate a court action that has already been entered into the lists. They thereby contravene a principle set out by the Economic Secretary last year, when he said that it would have been wrong to try to change the law during a court case. He said that the Committee would have been rightly shocked if the Government had sought to change the law between appeals, and that that would not have been right. Yet here we are engaged on a third piece of retrospective legislation on building societies precisely to prevent a court case from settling the matter.

[Mr. Beith]

All Governments should be stopped in their tracks when they consider engaging on retrospective legislation, yet here we have it for a third time on this matter.

A further proposal for retrospective legislation is not in the Bill but the Government have announced that it will be introduced by an amendment. It involves life insurance companies. We shall examine it with particular care as the Government engage in their habitual recourse to retrospection in almost every Finance Bill.

I welcome some features of the Bill. Clause 59 increases the rates of relief against inheritance tax, as has already been mentioned. I also welcome the farmland exemptions. In the case of farmland, it is important to get the balance right so that we do not open a door which invites investment solely for the purpose of securing a tax exemption. That would damage agriculture. So far as those engaged in the industry have been able to assess, the clause seems to get the balance about right. It is a point that the Government must watch carefully.

The objective is obviously to help to keep farmland in families who have farmed it as a viable business proposition: it is not to open up a new door to people looking for a tax shelter who, in the process of doing so, inflate land prices to the general detriment of agriculture. We must be sure that that balance is carefully kept.

The provisions on the married couple's allowance are welcome. Again, they are provisions which we have sought for some time. In the past, the Government resisted them on the grounds of administrative cost. I also welcome what the Government have done on gift aid, which again follows an amendment that we moved last year. We wanted to go further, but at least the Government have made a move, and we welcome it.

The Bill is far from the most exciting Finance Bill that has come before the House. I hope that its Committee stage will not drag on too long. It will allow for the exploration of several points that I have mentioned this afternoon. There will be many other occasions on which the general failings of economic policy which have rather dominated today's debates can be explored.

5.59 pm

Mr. John Horam (Orpington): As you will be aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not a maiden speech, but speaking for the first time as the Member for Orpington it would be remiss of me if I did not pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Ivor Stanbrook, who had been the Member for Orpington for 22 years. Those who remember Ivor will recall his trenchant views on many subjects, from the family to Northern Ireland, and his willingness to express them both inside and outside the House with strength and vigour. In that sense he was a true parliamentarian and was highly regarded as such. He was also highly regarded by the people of Orpington.

Historically, Orpington was a part of the county of Kent, but due to some ill-advised local government changes by a previous Conservative Government, for the past 25 years it has been part of the London borough of Bromley. For the most part, my constituents earn their living by commuting into central London and in particular to the City. Their first concern, therefore, is the health of the British economy, which is why I thought it appropriate to make my re-entry speech on the Finance Bill.

My constituents are equally concerned about British Rail's performance when they make their journey into central London, but that is a topic for another occasion.

The Government rightly gave high priority in the Queen's Speech to reducing inflation further, but they, and we, will not forget that this recession began in mid-1990, and we have not seen the end of it yet. In their natural concern to reduce inflation further, I hope that they will not push it to the point where the recession is prolonged unnecessarily. Any Government's economic policy must maintain a balance between inflationary dangers and deflationary problems. While we concede that we went too far in pushing growth and inflation in the late 1980s, I do not want the Government to make the equal and opposite mistake and to persist too long with deflationary policies, given the present state of the economy.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who said that we have an opportunity to lower interest rates and that we should press it. I shall not follow him down the path of Lubyanka and lederhosen, but will simply make the straightforward political point that, while we understood that, for economic and political reasons, the Government could not take risks before the general election, they have forced themselves out of that trap by their skill, and are in a much stronger position. They can take risks, and they should pursue every legitimate opportunity to lower interest rates. I do not believe that we will for ever be bound by the German view of what is right for Europe, and that is becoming the more rational appreciation in the markets and among economists

My second point relates to public expenditure, on which my view is simple: public expenditure has risen, is rising and should be diminished. As my hon. Friend said in his opening remarks, while the Government reduced the share of GDP taken by general Government expenditure during their period in office from 45 per cent. to a low point of about 40 per cent., it is now creeping back towards 43 per cent. That is too high. One argument is that the increase results partly from the recession. Unemployment benefit has increased and as a result public expenditure has increased, but, ineluctably, it will automatically reduce as we emerge from recession.

As the prospects of coming out of recession recede—GNP is already being revised downwards for this year—the problem will remain with us. There again, the Government have an interest in striking the right balance between restarting growth and dealing with public expenditure.

No doubt the Government would also say that part of the public expenditure total was engineered deliberately to flatten out the recession—if public expenditure had not been as high, the recession would certainly have been worse. That argument is all very well at that point in time, but when one begins to emerge from recession the position looks different.

Present fiscal policy is too lax and monetary policy too tight. That is what is wrong with the balance of Government policy. They need to adjust the balance as soon as they can, in the interests of sensible growth.

The Government have achieved a low-income-tax, low-corporation-tax economy. Our continental competitors take far more of their GNP in taxation than we do. We have opened a gap between us and them. That is one reason among many—others are a stable Government, an open trade policy and access to the Community—why we

are making this country a superb place in which to do business. That opportunity is open to us and should be pursued.

However, even if we reduce general Government expenditure to 40 per cent. of GNP, other countries are still below us, such as Japan, where it is 32 per cent., and the United States of America, where it is 37 per cent. America still has a good economy despite all the rubbish which is written about it. They will continue to open the gap, as will many other Asian countries. We have to press further in that direction.

The Chief Secretary wrote a pamphlet not long ago describing his vision of an ultra-low-tax economy, and I share that vision. That is the way forward. It can create the virtuous circle—with lower taxation, one will achieve growth, and although public expenditure declines as a proportion of GDP, absolute expenditure rises in real terms, as my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary said. Although past Conservative Governments have increased the standard of living of the average family by a monumental proportion, in comparison with Labour Governments, they have also kept public expenditure rising at a rate not far short of expenditure under Labour Governments. They have done the two-card trick.

That is the course that I recommend to my right hon. Friend. The Government will know when they have reached the point of success because, precisely at that moment, 365 academic economists will undoubtedly write to *The Times* to say that their policy is wrong and will never come right, and that the economy can make no progress with that approach. Perhaps that will not happen this time. The academics may have learnt their lesson. However, I am afraid that academics do not usually learn their lesson and are too arrogant to keep quiet.

Perhaps this time, 365 distinguished members of the public sector will condemn the Government, led by the governors of the BBC, the British Medical Association and others, no doubt after a reflective lunch at the Luckham Park or some other watering place. I hope that, when that moment comes, the Government will have seen the success of those policies and will stick to their guns.

6.7 pm

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): I am grateful that you have called me, Madam Deputy Speaker, and, in rising for the first time in the House, I congratulate you on your new position. As you would expect, I extend those congratulations to my fellow west midlander, the new Speaker. In Wolverhampton, North-East many people were delighted at the appointment of Miss Betty Boothroyd to the Speaker's Chair and felt that it brought honour to the west midlands.

I know that it is customary to pay regard to one's predecessors and it gives me considerable pleasure to remind the House of John Baird, who finished serving as a Member in 1964. I recall him visiting my boyhood home during his constituency duties. Later, when I was a young and active trade unionist, I remember the great pleasure of listening to John Baird on his public engagements. He was a great and considerable advocate of equality. I recall reading that, when asked about the honours list, he said, somewhat pithily:

"I joined the Labour party to make workers of Lords and not Lords of workers."

That was a considerable statement at the time.

Following John Baird came Renée Short, who had a distinguished parliamentary career, not least as Chair of the Select Committee on Social Services, which produced a number of important reports. One report, with a touch of déjà vu, dealt with the hours of junior doctors, and another seminal one covered maternity services in this country. That report is still widely quoted and much respected, and Renée's work on it will be long remembered.

My immediate predecessor, Mrs. Hicks, will be recalled more for what happened to the people of Wolverhampton, North-East during her term in the House than for what she did. However, I know that she had a sincere understanding of her constituents' needs and that she worked hard during her time in the House to ensure that those needs were met However, it is for what happened during her tenure, particularly the unremitting increase in the number of unemployed in Wolverhampton, North-East, for which Mrs. Hicks will be recalled. On average, 30 people were chasing every vacancy. In the past two years in Wolverhampton, between 50 and 60 unemployed folk have been chasing every vacancy.

In the same period, the social security system was changed. It is no coincidence that there was a tremendous increase in the crime rate at the same time as the young, long-term unemployed experienced such difficulties in finding remunerative work. Those factors are connected, although other considerations must be taken into account.

In the context of changes in the benefit system, many people may share my concern that there has been a poor take-up among elderly people of the benefits available to them. Many of them fear that, if they go to the benefit office for support or for a grant, they will end up with a loan that they cannot possibly repay. I ask hon. Members to recognise that that particular aspect of the benefit system is bound to fail because it does not take into account the great fears that many pensioners have. They share similar fears to their parents who, in the 1930s, were worried about the workhouse and the debtors' gaol. Pensioners still hold such fears, and if the benefit system does not take proper account of them it is no surprise if the take-up of benefit by elderly people is not particularly high.

In my constituency, great distress was caused to a partially sighted man of 70 years who lost what little money he had to take him through a particular week, and faced a weekend with no food in his flat. He attempted to sell bits and pieces of his belongings to make ends meet before his next benefit cheque arrived, but failed to do so. He went to the local benefit office and was offered a loan of £10, but he refused to accept it because he felt that he would be unable to pay it back as his income for the following week would be exactly the same and there was never anything left to spare. We do not want such cases to arise in Great Britain and I urge that benefit officers should be told that grants rather than loans should be given to pensioners in almost every case when an emergency occurs.

The period in which my predecessor, Mrs. Hicks, was in the House was marked by a local authority housing waiting list which grew to its highest level for 25 years. Of course, there are some social reasons for that—such as the unfortunate breakdown of marriages and the number of young people pursuing tenancies in their own right. However, at the heart of the growing waiting list problem lies the fact that local authorities have not been able to

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build for need. When that is combined with the fact that many young people starting out fear unemployment and do not take the plunge into buying a house, it has led to considerable housing difficulties in Wolverhampton and elsewhere in the country. Those difficulties are rooted in the fact that local authorities are unable to build for general needs.

Many couples face frustration in their hunt for decent housing. I do not want to witness the tragedy of little children spending their formative years in high-rise flats and five-storey walk-ups. Councils should be able to build for general need so that every young couple has an opportunity to rent or buy property at a price that they can afford and children have an opportunity to play in gardens, as is their absolute right.

It has been my intention that the thread running through my speech should be related to employment—the wealth that it creates and the misery that the lack of it causes. One of the growth areas for employment in recent years has been the worker co-operative movement, in which I have been proud to play some part. At the same time, mainline co-operative societies have faced strong competition, but they have met it by merging and growing. Unfortunately, the tax position of those societies has worsened since 1984 so that the growth in their profits has been overtaken by the growth in their tax burden.

I am sure that that was not the intention, but as the societies have grown and amalgamated to face the competition, they have lost the benefit of the small firms remission of corporation tax. I urge the Government to consider that with some sympathy because the first priority of co-operative societies is not profit maximisation: they depend on retained profits and borrowing to expand and to meet the needs of the shopping public. I believe that they should be encouraged, rather than discouraged as they have been by the loss of the remission.

The reasons that remission was given to co-operative societies are still valid today as co-operatives have an important part to play in the development of employment in our communities. Statistics show that, in 1990-91, such societies paid a much greater rate in tax than they earned in profits. That matter should be addressed by the House.

6.16 pm

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): I am obliged to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to utter my first words in the House.

I am pleased to speak in the same debate as my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), whom I have watched for many years with great respect. Even though he has momentarily left the Chamber, I am also glad to follow my constituency neighbour, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who I am pleased to see so happily installed in his new job. I congratulate the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) on his maiden speech, and I look forward to sparring with him across the Chamber on many future occasions.

Rutland and Melton is an oasis of traditional England between the M1 and the A1. It is surrounded by towns such as Leicester, Nottingham, Grantham—perhaps not so much a town as a shrine—Stamford and Corby. The agricultural interest remains important and, although it may not please some hon. Members, hunting remains not only popular, but a living force for the interests of conservation.

The constituency also has light industry. Indeed, if one owns a pet, the chances are that one will have fed it with a brand name from Europe's largest canning factory in Melton Mowbray. The constituency also includes Syston and Thurmaston on the edge of Leicester, and the spectacular vale of Belvoir.

Perhaps the constituency is best known for containing the valiant county of Rutland. I took a look at the history books, one of which says:

"although Rutland had a distinct status in the Anglo-Saxon period, its rise to the status of shire and the dignity of a sheriff was the product of a confused process in the twelfth century".

That same book states that the 1974 local reforms

"removed elements of disorder on the map, such as the foolish county of Rutland."

I say of that author, the more fool him.

Those local government reforms created a hateful mix of the urban and the rural. They trampled over traditional boundaries and ignored community identities. Feeling in Rutland still runs very high indeed and most people want the return of unitary status for the county. And why not? If the cost is not punitive, they should be entitled to the status for which they are asking. I am pleased to say that, thanks to legislation passed by my party, including the Local Government Act 1992, and with the Royal Commission just starting its work, Rutland is given a chance. I implore hon. Members to take Rutland's case seriously and not to dismiss it as a quixotic campaign or to disqualify Rutland simply on the grounds of its size.

I take up the cudgels for Rutland and Melton behind a line of distinguished parlimentarians. For a long time, Rutland was represented by Sir Kenneth Lewis. He still lives in the constituency, and I sometimes think that he has as many friends as there are people in the county. He is a popular figure, always ready with some fatherly advice and a good yarn to tell.

But for 18 years Melton, and then Rutland and Melton, were served by Michael Latham. From a personal point of view, I could not have been more fortunate in the person I shadowed for two years as prospective candidate. All in the area talk of the diligent and conscientious manner in which Michael Latham handled constituency problems. He entered the House with a particular expertise in housing, and Ministers came to value his advice. He developed a reputation for being independent-minded. He was not one to seek office at all costs.

His religious views, and his opinions on the state of Israel particularly, are well known, and it is appropriate that he should have moved on from here to run the Council of Christians and Jews. Contrary to reports, I do not believe that he intends to take holy orders. I hope that that will mean that Michael will not be entirely lost to politics in the years ahead. I am sure that hon. Members join me in wishing him and his wife Caroline every good fortune.

My purpose in speaking today is to welcome the measures in the Finance Bill. The measure marks the continuation of the economic progress that we have made since 1979. Indeed, the determination to tackle economic collapse spurred me above all to enter political activity in the first place.

Particularly welcome are the inheritance tax proposals. They are based on the belief that the successful

accumulation of wealth should be allowed to be passed on. Why—as it appears many Opposition Members would have it—should every generation be required to go back to square one, based on some misplaced understanding of what equality of opportunity involves? The Bill will benefit family farms and family businesses, and I welcome the measures so well defended by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend).

Any Bill designed to alter the rules of taxation inevitably provokes a litany of special pleading, and it is the unenviable task of the Chancellor and his team to distinguish naked self-interest from a good case. In his original Budget statement, the Chancellor referred to surplus advanced corporation tax—to some, perhaps, a rather abtruse matter. Some companies are taxed in the United Kingdom on estimates of their earnings overseas. Indeed, they are overtaxed, but they are stuck with the position.

The effect is to reduce the research and development that such companies would carry out in this country, and it works against their wishing to set up their headquarters in the United Kingdom. That was not intended to flow from the imputation tax system that developed in the 1970s, and I hope that the Chancellor will reconsider in the years ahead the effects of the measure.

The Bill contains many welcome measures affecting the operation of VAT, especially the removal of fiscal frontier controls. But there remain some simple, practical difficulties in the administration of VAT that should be addressed particularly as no cost would be involved.

I could cite the example of a haulage contractor based in Melton Mowbray who pays VAT on his fuel purchases in other EC member countries. As a business, he is entitled to reclaim it, but he does not get it back, as least not for months and sometimes even years. We decent Brits repay overseas claimants quickly, but that efficiency is not reciprocated. So again, our comparative sense of fair play works more to the benefit of our competitors than to that of our exporting businesses. I urge the Revenue to take a good look at the fair working of the refunding of VAT elsewhere in the Community.

I hope that the Finance Bill is but a prelude to our addressing certain long-term objectives for the economy. Some of the nastier consequences of the recession flow from the extent to which the fortunes of businesses and individuals are critically affected by changes in interest rates. We have a structural problem, in part a cultural one. Far too much of our investment funding in based on debt rather than on equity. It should become one of the major challenges of this Parliament to address the question of how to shift investment from debt to equity, because part of the problem arises from the simple fact that debt servicing is tax-deductible, while the cost of equity servicing is not.

Hand in hand with that is the objective of overseeing recovery without massive house price inflation. As many of my hon. Friends know, wary though I am of taking further steps towards monetary union, I believe that the ERM might yet prove a blessing, in that its effect will be to iron out the peaks and troughs which in the past have been damagingly extreme.

I am all for people owning their homes, but we do better to persuade them not to look on their houses as a tax-free source of easy riches on which they can regularly draw. I would rather we promoted a savings culture in which individuals increasingly had a genuine stake in the economy, and the key to that is pensions.

At present, our pensions rules are unfathomable. A personal pension attaching unequivocally to the person who has invested in it will lead to private capital accumulation in areas other than housing. Why cannot employees in the public sector pay their contributions into private schemes? We should take a long-term view, for the time has come when people should be allowed to do that.

By tackling such structural deficiencies in the economy, we could provoke a major change in the economic fortunes of individuals. I share the Chancellor's vision of a capital-owning democracy. I hope that we can see an economy in which individuals increasingly build their own stake in it. I hope that we can promote a savings culture out of which dependency on the state will be reduced and self-reliance increased. If, to set the tone, a strict settlement of our public expenditure commitments is demanded, the Chancellor and his team will have vigorous support in their efforts from this quarter.

6.29 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) on a witty and thought-provoking speech. Listening to him, I felt that my constituency in the inner city of Leeds was worlds away from his. I agree that we should be addressing the long-term structural problems facing our economy but, unlike the hon. Gentleman, I do not believe that the Finance Bill even starts to do that. We are faced with the leftovers of the pre-election tax-cutting bribe of a Budget that was rushed through the House in March.

In response to the Finance Secretary's speech, I would point out that, on 9 April, the people of Leeds, West delivered their verdict on the Budget and the Finance Bill: they overwhelmingly rejected them because they felt that they do not address their problems. Like the recent Queen's Speech, there is nothing in the Bill to tackle the rising unemployment that so many of my constituents face. According to the Government's last April figures, unemployment in my constituency is running at 10·7 per cent. That is a 17 per cent. increase on April last year. However, there are no practical measures in the Budget to tackle long-term unemployment, which is becoming a primary cause of poverty, particularly when financial assistance to the unemployed is so inadequate.

In his former life, before he converted to Treasury ways, the Financial Secretary voted against Government moves to cut unemployment benefit. I hope that he continues in that strategy, but I suspect from his speech that we shall not see him defending unemployment benefit.

There are no measures in the Bill to address the problems of the change in the labour market. There is now a fracture between what might be described as the primary restricted market, offering relatively secure, well-paid employment, and an expanding secondary labour market in which employment is temporary, irregular or part-time and often badly paid.

There is not much in the Finance Bill for the homeless and those in my constituency who desperately need a decent, adequate home at a rent that they can afford. There is not even a clause to enable local authorities to use their accumulated capital receipts from the sale of council houses. There is no extension of last year's moratorium on

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stamp duty. Despite the fact that, in 1991, 75,500 homes were repossessed because people could not keep up mortgage repayments, all that the Bill offers, in clause 36, is a tinkering with the business expansion scheme.

In other words, the Bill is characterised by its omissions. It is remarkable for its silences on matters that affect thousands of our constituents who want something to address their real economic circumstances. The Bill is part of the Government's strategy of simply sustaining the impression that there are no economic problems left since the general election. The Government are putting across the impression that unemployment has not escalated; that, in the first three months of 1992, 14,900 firms did not go bust; that homelessness on our streets and in the doorways of our major cities is an illusion; that low and lowering pay is not a reality for many people.

The President of the Board of Trade, speaking recently at a conference organised by *The Sunday Times*, called for pay restraint. Rather than addressing the average unit labour cost, he would have done better to address the board of directors' rake offs, which have been running at 9·3 per cent. Most of my constituents earn nowhere near the average wage of nearly £400 a week for the male earner, and many women earn even less.

In the debate on the last Finance Bill, the then Chief Secretary said:

"It is always difficult to forecast a turning point, but there is now accumulating evidence of one."

He referred to

"a marked increase in optimism and output expectations"

and spoke of the "recovery in confidence". He said:

"We are confident that it will lead to an increase in activity . . . We must remember how far we have come from a stagnant economy."

Later, he said:

"perception is lagging behind reality."—[*Official Report*, 30 April 1991; Vol. 190, c. 178-80.]

We have not come very far from that "stagnant economy". The Government have still not yet caught up with the reality behind their perceptions. The number of people unemployed for over a year is now 841,000—an increase by 94,000 in the first quarter of this year. Unemployment has now risen for 25 consecutive months. Last month alone, 42,600 people lost their jobs. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research forecasts that unemployment will remain at almost 3 million for the next five years. That is the prospect that we face despite the Government's assurance a year ago that we had come out of a "stagnant economy".

The public sector borrowing requirement is projected at a staggering £34 billion for this financial year, and the Government are saying that they cannot get it down without swingeing cuts in public expenditure. I predict that, despite protestations in the Chamber and in the papers, the Government will come to the House before too long to announce that they have abolished zero rating of VAT so as to tackle the size of the PSBR. The only other way to tackle it is to increase personal taxation, and the Government are committed to go in the other direction.

Manufacturing investment fell by 11 per cent. to the first quarter of 1992 and is 27 per cent. lower than at its peak in the first quarter of 1990. In constituencies such as mine, which is dependent on the engineering, textile and printing industries, that means that work in manufacturing has gone and will not come back because the Government will not commit resources to investment in manufacturing.

Interestingly, yesterday in Rio, the Secretary of State for the Environment told the world that the major nations were

"in the middle of a very, very bad recession."

When we come to the House to protest about high levels of unemployment, we are told by Ministers that the country is coming out of the recession. That is the line for consumption at home, but abroad they say that we are in the depths of a recession.

Yesterday, my local newspaper, the *Yorkshire Evening Post* had a report on the struggle of students to find jobs over the summer break. Young people bear the brunt of unemployment, and young people in further education, who cannot claim benefit during the holidays and who cannot get grants, have to find work somewhere to make ends meet. The report says:

"The annual hunt for summer jobs looks set to be tougher than ever with recession still taking its toll on traditional employers of casual workers."

According to the Department of Employment in Leeds, the amount of casual work on offer is down on last year. The total number of temporary jobs for the summer available in the city last week was 39, including vacancies for bar staff, cleaners and secretaries. There are not too many signs of recovery there, when even casual labour has almost totally dried up.

The Finance Bill could make improvements. Why do not the Government use clause 53 and schedule 11, which make tax changes for insolvent companies, to tackle a loophole in insolvency law which means that the occupational pensions of hundreds of people are in jeopardy from the Maxwell collapse? I suspect that that is merely the tip of a pension crash iceberg. The Government should change the rules and protect pensions.

The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton said that the pension rules were unfathomable. What is more than obvious in recent weeks is that occupational pensions are unprotected because the Government have not enacted sufficient protection measures for those pensions. Why cannot the Bill be used for that?

On a more positive note, why cannot the Government amend clause 48 and schedule 9 in order to foster and encourage the formation and growth of local community credit unions? That would be a practical and positive way in which to take people out of personal consumer debt and help those who are often left in the hands of the loan sharks. That would be better than raising inheritance tax thresholds simply to make it easier for owners of farms and family companies to pass on land and shares to their descendants. Clauses 58 and 59 and schedule 13 effectively take some 3,000 private estates in Britain out of inheritance tax altogether. That is hardly the hallmark of the classless society that the Prime Minister claims to be creating.

Clause 60 and schedule 14 deal with petrol tax. In this week of all weeks, with the Earth summit, would it not have been better for the Government to fund a complete review of the privatisation of public transport, particularly the bus sector, and then ensure that there is investment in public transport so that it becomes a positive economic alternative to cars?

The Government suggest that they cannot do anything, that they have no power, but they have just been elected to power. They cannot pretend, like a sympathetic, hand-wringing bystander, that they can do nothing. People will not allow the Government to hide behind paper charters while secretly manipulating the country's resources and pretending that there is nothing that can be done about the economy.

There is insufficient in the Finance Bill to address the fundamental problems that have been referred to of the need to provide employment and training and investment in our manufacturing base. The Bill simply shows that the Government are still prepared to give away twice as much money in personal tax cuts—about £1·8 billion—as they are prepared to give to industry, commerce and training to fight the recession—a mere £800 million.

I conclude with just a few observations from an essay by J. K. Galbraith, based on his latest book, "The Culture of Contentment". In that book, he spells out how an "underclass" is an integral part of a larger economic process serving the living standards and the comfort of the more favoured community, and how the economically fortunate are dependent on the presence of that "underclass". That "underclass" is increasingly denied any generational upward economic movement in our society and so becomes semi-permanent, frustrated and discontented.

Galbraith says:

"It is an occasion for wonder that the discontent and its more violent and aggressive manifestations are not greater than they are."

He continues:

"Nothing in the age of contentment has contributed so strongly to income inequality as the reduction of taxes on the rich."

He concludes:

"Life in the great cities in general could be improved, and only will be improved, by public action—by better schools with better-paid teachers, by strong, well-financed welfare services, by counselling on drug addiction, by employment training, by public investment in the housing that in no industrial country is provided for the poor by private enterprise, by adequately supported recreational facilities, libraries and police. The question once again, much accommodating rhetoric to the contrary, is not what can be done but what will be paid."

Sadly, that is a question that the Finance Bill does not address.

6.43 pm

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) will not be surprised to hear that I do not agree with much of his rather dismal analysis——

Mr. Battle: The hon. Gentleman does not live where I do.

Mr. Moate: —and gloomy predictions, despite the fact that we in the south-east of England also have quite severe problems resulting from unemployment and recession. However, the economic signs are rather brighter than the hon. Gentleman would suggest, and the Finance Bill will contribute significantly to the economic recovery that is on its way, albeit too slowly for most hon. Members.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman, however, in the tribute that he paid to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan). My hon. Friend made what I think we all thought was a most eloquent, amusing and powerful speech and I appreciated his generous tribute to his predecessor, Michael Latham.

I also take this opportunity to say how much I enjoyed the powerful speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam). In his previous incarnation, he was one of the most courteous, responsive and helpful Ministers, and if I did not say so at the time, he will understand that the circumstances were rather different.

The introduction of the new 20 per cent. tax band in the Budget was a most skilful and welcome proposition which was a key factor in the general election. It was a skilful use of limited resources which demonstrated the contrast between the Conservative party's belief in lower taxation and the Liberal and Labour parties' declared belief in higher taxation. The electorate understood that there were only limited resources and that the band could only be small at this stage, but that the measure was a pointer of hope for the future and a sign of how we intend to progress in years to come.

That aspect of the Budget was crucial. It was a skilful use of resources on which the electorate passed judgment —despite the view of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who seemed to suggest that the election proved that there was a vote for increases in taxation. The hon. Gentleman can convince himself of anything.

I want to address one particular point on which other hon. Members have touched. It is a specific point and I make no apologies for raising it because I suspect that this is the last serious chance that we shall have to persuade the Government to change their mind. I refer to something that is not in the Finance Bill, should be in the Finance Bill and perhaps—is it too much to hope?—will be in the Finance Bill by Third Reading. That is, the elimination of stamp duty on house purchase.

We all know that an exemption was introduced last autumn to try to stimulate the housing market. Can anyone deny that the housing market is still in need of stimulation? It is hardly logical that we should now be proposing to reintroduce stamp duty in August this year when the housing market is in such difficulties. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to reconsider the position now and to use this opportunity to think again about making permanent not just exemption from but—I go further— the elimination of stamp duty.

For years, many of us have argued that stamp duty on house purchase is an unjust and unfair tax. I think that all hon. Members believe in home ownership, despite different emphases, so it is illogical to have a tax on home ownership, particularly a tax which impinges when people are struggling hardest to buy their own home. We are almost getting rid of the tax. Exemption from it exists until August this year. Is it not ironic that, having come so close to eliminating the tax from the statute book, we are proposing to bring it back?

We are told that the revenue implications of the exemption from stamp duty would be too serious. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will answer this point specifically. I cannot see how that can be correct. We were told at the time of the exemption that it could be afforded because the £1 billion that it would cost would not be required until 1993 as a result of the introduction of the TAURUS system on the stock exchange. Therefore, at the

[Mr. Moate]

very least, we can afford further tax relief on housing for the rest of this year and into next year. The same argument applies.

A pick-up in the housing market may make the cost to the Exchequer even greater, but such a sign of economic activity would mean that we could afford to make tax relief on stamp duty permanent. That change would be welcomed. Last year, we were told that the cost of suspending stamp duty would be £400 million in a full 12 months. I do not believe that that is the measure of relief, because the housing market has not been that buoyant. We ought to be given facts and figures as to the real cost of the temporary relief, which I argue strongly should be made permanent.

In what other area of taxation does a zero rate operate, on a permanent basis, up to a figure of £30,000, and then a full rate on the whole amount? At present, there is stamp duty exemption up to £249,000, after which 1 per cent. is payable on the whole transaction. It is a most unjust and unfair tax, and few people could justify it except on the ground of revenue need.

The current need is to take action that will stimulate the housing market. I urge my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary not to allow stamp duty relief to be discontinued on 19 August. That is an arbitrary and unreasonable proposition. Instead, he should take the opportunity provided by the Bill to offer some help to home owners and to the housing market.

6.50 pm

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): During the general election campaign, the Government said that, if they were re-elected, there would be movement in the economy. Despite all the talk, Britain is still in recession. The Government say that business wants to be certain of the economy's overall condition. That is perhaps the only sentiment expressed by Ministers with which I can agree. Business does want to know with certainty what is the state of the economy.

Gross domestic product fell again in the first quarter of this year, as did manufacturing investment. Even the slight improvement in retail sales was counterbalanced by the appalling surge in our trade deficit, which seriously puts in question any sustained recovery. Unemployment continues to climb month after month, hitting individuals and their families and sapping morale. Behind every statistic there are human tragedies.

The recession has hit every region hard, but nowhere harder than London and the south-east. Unemployment in London, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, remains high and is rising, and many Londoners are finding it difficult to pay their way out of the highly geared situation in which they find themselves. That makes it unlikely that London's economy will be able to spend its way to recovery.

In Hornsey and Wood Green, more than 100 people chase every job vacancy. They are desperate; they look for work every day but are unable to find it. A similar picture is to be found throughout London, with the percentage of employees working in the service sector declining, and the construction sector facing the acute problems of the housing and office markets.

The sad debacle of the docklands—vaunted in the 1980s as the Conservatives' dream city, but now lying idle—tells its own story. The Prime Minister still considers the docklands

"one of the most remarkable projects one will find anywhere in the world."

To Londoners, it is a symbol of failed Conservatism—an unbending ideological commitment to the market, whatever the human cost. The *Evening Standard* is seldom thought of as a newspaper that is sympathetic to the Labour party, but on Friday it described London as "Ghost City, 1992", where,

"as the To Let sign becomes the dominant feature of London's cityscape ... great swathes of London could become a kind of European Brasilia—all architectural style and little content, the silence broken only by the footsteps of the security guards."

That is a devastating forecast for those of us who represent London constituencies and who love the capital.

The Government's refusal to invest in the Jubilee line extension, which is so badly needed if south-east and east London are to be rejuvenated, is symptomatic of another of London's problems: the continuing trend among top companies to relocate outside London. Who can blame them, when one considers London's transport infrastructure? Last April's survey by the Association of London Authorities of commuter fares in Europe showed that London had the highest fares in the Community.

The tragic human face of recession can be glimpsed in repossession figures for London and the United Kingdom as a whole. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) referred to the 75,000 families who lost their homes in 1991—the highest figure on record, and an increase of 72 per cent. on 1990. Mortgage levels show a similar sad tale, with one in 12 mortgage payers two months or more in arrears—another record level.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): One of the most frightening statistics of all is that more than 1 million families in south-east England have a mortgage debt that exceeds the value of their homes. They are unable to sell or to move, because they would immediately become insolvent.

Mrs. Roche: I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House are visited in their surgeries by constituents who have problems with mortgage arrears.

Londoners deserve better. London should once again be a world-class capital, but unfortunately the Bill contributes nothing to that. London needs investment in training, education, research, and development. I urge the Government to think again and to do something for London. When we do something for London, we shall be doing something for Britain as a whole, and for our economic future.

6.57 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): In judging the effectiveness of the Finance Bill, we ought to ascertain whether it will assist in the growth of our national resources, and in their distribution between our citizens. My constituents want to know what the Bill will achieve in terms of employment. Those who have a job want to know whether they are more likely to keep it. Those who are unemployed want to know whether they are more likely to get a job. My constituents want to know what the Bill will

do not only to their take-home pay but to their quality of life, in terms of the public services upon which they and their families rely.

Earlier, the Financial Secretary spoke of the Budget's contribution to the Government's victory in the general election. That victory was secured not only on the Government's record but on their promises, and now the Government must fulfil their promises. Their fulfilment may prove a good deal more difficult than their making.

The Government are responsible for the recession that dominates our economic life at present. The brakes were slammed on following the Lawson boom, but during the election campaign the Government tried to gloss over that fact with frequent references to the international aspects of recession, claiming that Britain was merely one of a number of countries suffering from the same problems. The Chancellor mentioned the recession in Germany in his Budget speech. It is interesting that he should have singled out that country. Last year, Germany was the only other European Community country in recession. The rest of Europe experienced a growth in output of 1·4 per cent., while this country suffered from recession throughout the same period.

In the Finance Bill we should be looking for ways of emerging from recession and assisting recovery. It is interesting to note that the Government have almost stopped talking about what the Bill will do to assist recovery; now, they almost take pride in saying that they are doing nothing—that they are simply sitting back and waiting for recovery to happen.

Significantly, there are no discernible signs of recovery in any of the daily or weekly indicators. That is especially true of those that have appeared since the general election. The Government, however, should not worry only about the fact that there are no signs of recovery at present; they should ask how long such a recovery will last—if, indeed, it comes at all—and how strong it will be. There are no signs of recovery in the manufacturing industry in my Sheffield constituency, and no signs of job creation. No investment is taking place. The suggestion that manufacturing industry would be willing to invest as soon as the result of the election was known has simply not been borne out.

All that my constituents see is the prospect of unemployment not only remaining high, but rising further. All that the small businesses in my constituency see is a worsening prospect of being put out of business, rather than the hope of future recovery. As for the retail industry, we all see in our towns and cities not the prospect of recovery, but the reality of shops being boarded up daily and weekly.

Is housing supposed to get us out of recession? There is little evidence of recovery in the private sector. Throughout the debate, Conservative Members have referred to the proposal to reinstate stamp duty, the temporary abolition of which represents the one small effort that the Government have made to bring about recovery in housing. As for their public-sector housing record, it continues to be deplorable in every way. Indeed, an Audit Commission report produced the other day condemned the Government on both economic and social grounds.

The Government could have included in the Bill a measure to stimulate economic recovery by putting people to work in the construction industry, at the same time providing homes for those who are currently homeless. That would not have cost them a penny. Sheffield city council has £21 million in capital receipts this year: it has this money in its coffers, which it could spend tomorrow if the Government would only remove the restrictions on such spending. That is the kind of assistance that they could give if they chose to do so.

All that we have heard from Conservative Members about public-sector help is a request for the Government to get tough with spending Departments in the coming financial round. When Conservative Members talk about getting tough with spending Departments, they really mean getting tough with the homeless, the sick, children and the elderly, for those are the people who rely on large spending Departments to deliver the services that they want.

Ours is not simply a short-term problem. The Government should concentrate not only on recovery in the short term; major failings can be seen in the medium and long term as well, and the Bill does not address them. Let us examine the Government's claimed achievements. Apparently, all the heartache of unemployment and all the problems of recession are necessary simply to lower inflation to a reasonable level. It seems to me that the Government's one achievement—their one claimed achievement, even—is the lowering of inflation. In any event, in historical terms 5·7 per cent. is not particularly low.

Achieving that level of inflation has necessitated a further rise in unemployment. The last set of figures showed not merely an increase, but a rising rate of increase. The level has risen from a record level in boom conditions. Meanwhile, there is no growth in the economy. As the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) pointed out an hour or so ago, although the Government claim credit for interest rate reductions, reductions in interest rates are themselves not real, but only apparent. Because of the fall in inflation that took place at the same time, real interest rates have risen during the period in which the Government have presided over the longest recession in post-war Britain. As yet, the Government have given us no answer to explain that major contradiction.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North drew some interesting comparisons between indicators. The Government face real problems, and they must deal with those problems. At a time of record recession and record rises in unemployment, why does our balance of payments show not merely a deficit, but a deficit that is beginning to grow? A public sector borrowing requirement of £28 billion is forecast. That figure is camouflaged by receipts from privatisations; moreover, according to all the current estimates, the PSBR is likely to increase to £40 billion by the end of the year. Surely we are seeing a very special kind of economic mismanagement when a Government preside over a rapidly rising balance of payments deficit and a rapidly rising PSBR at the same time. The Government must resolve that problem, and the problem of conflicting indicators.

The root of these problems is the Government's long-term mismanagement of the economy. They have failed to invest in infrastructure in both the public and the private sector. Our economy needs more than a way of emerging from a short-term recession. It is not just a matter of addressing the medium-term issues; a proper, sustained and planned long-term economic approach is

[Mr. Clive Betts]

required. We need a long-term plan for public-sector investment if we are to secure the infrastructure that other European Community countries have.

Let us consider the Government's record. The issue of Canary Wharf and docklands has been raised this afternoon; alongside that is the question of the rail link with the channel tunnel. The channel tunnel is supposed to be one of the great efforts at investment in infrastructure to benefit our economy as a result of growing ties with Europe, but there is still considerable uncertainty about where—and, indeed, whether—the rail link will be built. It is disgraceful that we are not constructing that link now, but are arguing about where it should be built, and whether it should be built at all.

In terms of benefit to Sheffield, there has been no meaningful discussion, let alone any real investment, in connection with a link not between the tunnel and London but on to the north, so that that area too can gain long-term economic benefits from trade with Europe, and from being part of the European Community. Where is the Government's plan for that, and where will the investment come from?

Where are the plans and investment to deal with the way in which we move people around in our cities? What are the Government's proposals? Bus deregulation in 1986 has beent their only offering in that regard, and it has proved disastrous for the economic and social life of our major cities. The Government are now investing in a light rail system, but we should compare Sheffield with its twin city, Bochum in Germany. Bochum's bus service has not been deregulated. It has an efficient tramway and light rail system and a regional rail network, and it has invested in inter-city rail services. Its economy is far more advanced than ours.

We have also failed to invest in education and training, the personal as well as the physical infrastructure. We lack, therefore, the ingredients for long-term competitiveness.

As for the way that we are treating small businesses during the recession—the seedcorn of our future economic growth—as the chair of the south Yorkshire pensions authority, I have witnessed during the recession small firms applying in their hundreds for venture capital investment. No other financial institutions were willing to invest in them. The Finance Bill does not address the fundamental question of how to channel finance from the financial institutions into manufacturing and other industries, so that wealth can be created in order to sustain long-term growth and recovery.

Conservative Members ought to be asking why the Government are not putting forward proposals to sustain and develop small firms. That key issue must be addressed. The Finance Bill fails to provide assistance towards short-term economic recovery. Moreover, the Bill does not deal with medium-term problems, including the conflict between the balance of payments deficit on the one hand and record levels of unemployment and record low levels of growth on the other. It fails also to address long-term investment issues, including improvements to the infrastructure. Furthermore, it includes nothing that would assist the development and growth of small firms.

7.11 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Tonight we are debating the Finance Bill, some two months after the general election when the Conservative party obtained roughly the same share as it did last time and the time before—42·8 per cent. of the poll. Under the present electoral system, that is once again being translated into a Conservative overall majority in the House of Commons, but this time the Government have only 336 seats. Nevertheless, that represents 51·6 per cent. of the total number of seats.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer regards that as a ringing endorsement of the Government. In the debate on the Queen's Speech, he said:

"the British people have given a ringing endorsement of the Government's economic policies, and decisively rejected the tired shop-worn policies of the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues."—[*Official Report*, 13 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 628.]

He was, of course, referring to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). What he failed, however, to grapple with was the arithmetic. Any ringing endorsement would have demanded, I should have thought, at least 50 per cent., and 42·6 per cent. is considerably short of that. This Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is in charge of the nation's finances, is incapable of moderating his language and his adjectives.

Furthermore, at the Conservative party conference on 11 October 1990, the Chief Secretary said of the poll tax:

"Let us go out from this hall together and proclaim its advantages. The community charge makes local government accountable. The community charge revives local democracy. The community charge puts power into the hands of local people. That, ladies and gentlemen, is an achievement to be proud of."

However, the Chief Secretary's achievement has been to squander £19 billion of taxpayers' money. That sum would have gone a considerable way towards wiping out the forthcoming public sector borrowing requirement. That man, translated from the Department of the Environment to the Treasury, is now in charge of the nation's economy. I fear that that is a bad omen for the next three or four years.

Reasonable people—I do not regard the Chief Secretary or the Chancellor of the Exchequer as reasonable in this respect—might have thought that the Government's new majority, which is very much smaller than the Conservative party obtained for the last Parliament, would at least have led to some measures of a more consensual nature, which the majority of electors who voted against the Conservatives would have recognised as necessary and beneficial for the country.

A foreign journalist might have been tempted to write a piece saying that the Tories had had a major reverse, that they had lost 40 seats and that they needed to rethink their policies on such matters as how to get out of the recession and how to stop hospital waiting lists from growing to all-time highs. The waiting lists are higher now than they were during the winter of discontent. That is an utter condemnation of the Conservative party.

Mr. Dorrell: Wrong

Dr. Marek: It is not wrong. I have the statistics here. I shall pass them to the Financial Secretary so that he can educate himself.

The Tory party could also, according to the foreign journalist, have thought about how to cut the burden of

taxation. It is much higher now that it was under Labour in the 1970s. The Tory party might also, according to the foreign journalist's piece, have thought about how to regulate the seamy side of the City and, above all, about how to get people back to work and provide enough homes for every family to live in. But not a bit of it.

This second Finance Bill simply puts into effect measures that were announced in the March Budget that were not included in the Finance Bill introduced before the election. Any foreign journalist, and many hon. Members on this side of the House reading the Bill, could remark only upon its inconsequentiality when it comes to the great economic issues that face the country.

Despite that lack of substance, we have had a good debate. A number of Members have made some very good points. As usual, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) made a succinct and clear critique of the Bill.

I wish to refer to the maiden speech, or perhaps it was a quasi-maiden speech, of the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam). Certain parts of his speech were clearly not pure Thatcher, especially when he urged the House not to treat inflation as the judge and jury of Government policies and when he asked the Government to get us out of recession and not to worry too much about inflation. I thought that I saw a few of his hon. Friends looking into the distance when he made his speech. Nevertheless, it was very interesting and I was pleased to hear it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) made a telling maiden speech. He spoke from the heart about the problems faced by his constituents when it came to the benefits for which they have to apply when out of work. His statement about making workers out of lords and not lords out of workers is one about which I shall have to think for a little longer before I come to a decision as to its validity. It may need just a few qualifications. Nevertheless, I was glad to hear my hon. Friend.

I suspect that the result of the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) will be that we shall hear more of Rutland in this Chamber. If his speech is anything to go by, the hon. Gentleman will pay great regard to the needs of his constituents. He referred to the fact that Finance Bills involve special pleading. I have to say to him in a nice way, since it was a maiden speech —though I had to choke back an intervention when he made the point—that special pleading usually comes when 40 or 50 new clauses are tabled by his hon. Friends for the Committee stage of a Finance Bill. I hope, therefore, that he will be a member of the Committee, when I shall ask him to monitor the special pleading with me and my hon. Friends.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) made his usual speech—*[Interruption.]* His points were valid and well put. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche), speaking for the second time, spoke about London. She is right to say that London has one of the most decrepit transport systems. Something must be done. Hon. Members have only to go to any other capital city in western Europe to see that my hon. Friend is right.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) spoke well. It was not a maiden speech, and I am sure that we will hear many more contributions from him about the difficulties facing Sheffield in the recession.

We charge that the Government are smug and self-satisfied. They know that they need not be in a hurry, as there is some time before they have to face the electorate again. They are prepared to see our present economic troubles continue with a substantial minority of people living in poverty. Since the election, it has become clear that the Chancellor's estimate of a £28 billion public sector borrowing requirement for 1992-93 was either incompetent or mischievous. In spite of 13 years of Tory rule, public finances are in a desperate state.

It is widely believed that the Treasury now thinks that the deficit will be over £30 billion, as opposed to the £28 billion forecast at the time of the Budget, and that next year it will be about £40 billion. That represents 6 per cent. of GDP. Hon. Members will note that that is double the suggested maximum in the Maastricht treaty. The Government have some way to go before achieving what the Maastricht treaty says should be achieved in the United Kingdom.

In addition, last month's trade figures showed that the current account was above £1 billion again, so I doubt whether the Treasury's forecast of 3 per cent. growth for the years 1993-94 and onwards can be achieved without an early balance of payments crisis. At least in previous Tory-inspired recessions—1974-75 and 1980-81—we had a balance of payments surplus. Not this time—we are in a hole. When a Conservative Government get the country's economy into a mess, the Labour party is usually called upon by the electors to form a Government and get us out of trouble. This time, 42·8 per cent. of the electorate have inflicted another Conservative Government on the country, and it is up to that Government to do something about the recession.

I search in vain in the Finance Bill for any new Government action. It was once said that economic management is like trying to drive a fast car with the aid of only a rear view mirror. The Government are driving the economy in precisely that way, with the aid of a road map called the free market. They are blind as to where the car is going. The car is sliding dangerously on mud at the roadside while the Government continue to behave as if nothing is happening. They are unbearably complacent. If they were to shake themselves out of that complacency, they would do something about manufacturing industry.

In the first quarter of 1992, GDP has fallen yet again by 0·6 per cent. The Treasury said that GDP would recover by 2 per cent. in this financial year. However, the latest figures show GDP coming back by only 1 per cent. at the very best.

Ministers blithely assert that, as exports had increased in volume terms by 3 per cent., the trade figures could be largely discounted and, indeed, were something of a success. Unfortunately, that is not so. With the pound locked into the ERM, what will the Government do if, at the slightest hint of an upturn, it becomes painfully clear that imports will be sucked in to such a catastrophic extent? It is the balance of payments that matters and no amount of ministerial spin-doctoring on the radio will get around that awkward fact.

The Government must extend their economic management. Trading off unemployment against inflation without making use of other economic powers that the Chancellor has at his disposal simply does not work, and, even worse, it creates two nations. The latest unemployment figures show an increase of 42,600 in April. The Government calculated total stands at 2·6 million—9·5 per cent. of the

[Dr. Marek]

work force. Many others, particularly women, are looking for work and do not appear in the figures. If unemployment were judged in a fairer and more moral way, we would say that it was now 3·8 million.

Is low unemployment in any way a target of Government economic policy or is it simply traded off against inflation with other economic and fiscal policies lying idle and not being used to cut unemployment and inflation at one and the same time? That is what a Labour Government would be doing now.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point) *rose*——

Dr. Marek: I would give way, but I am afraid that the Government Front Bench spokesman wants me to get on.

In a nutshell, we have a high PSBR of at least £30 billion this year, rising to about £40 billion, which will represent 6 per cent. of GDP—twice the maximum level in the Maastricht treaty; we have a contracting GDP, which is 0·6 per cent. down this quarter, the seventh quarter in succession in which it has gone down, making this one of the worst recessions ever; we have a serious balance of payments problem, and we cannot get out of it by devaluation; and imports outstrip exports at the slightest hint of an upturn.

There is no doubt that a major cause of the present lamentable or, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) would say, "Lamontable," situation is the Government's neglect of industry. One of the most depressing facts is that the United Kingdom is the only EC country where manufacturing investment is lower now than it was in 1979. But, there we are, the Government must take responsibility and answer to the people. They cannot continue to do nothing or scramble about trying to get another 0·5 per cent. cut in interest rates. That will not be enough. Unless the Government act now, our position will continue to worsen when compared with other EC countries.

It is possible that we could get out of these problems by strong world economic growth. However, that will not happen. Only yesterday the Centre for Economic Forecasting said that world growth "will be slight". If the Government do not act, unemployment will continue to rise to even higher, morally unacceptable levels. There will no doubt be painful cuts in the public expenditure round in the autumn and £19 billion will suddenly become a great sum. Our housing crisis will continue to worsen, training programmes will continue to be underfunded, school classes will be too large, the NHS will continue to lose beds and British Rail, the most crowded and least punctual service in western Europe, will continue to be badly funded. All that will continue with taxation higher now than it was in 1979.

The comparison with Canary Wharf is instructive. The building is about 42·8 per cent. full, and Olympia and York has too great a borrowing requirement, with the result that work on the project has stopped. That is what is likely to happen to the economy, and it is certainly similar to driving a car using only a rear mirror. Blind faith in Thatcherite policies has led to the present sorry mess at Canary Wharf. It is an ugly and intrusive building that nobody wants in an area that nobody can get to. It is a development hungry for more public money.

The Opposition believe that, although the scheme should now succeed, public money should have been better spent. Industry needs to be looked after to produce goods made in this country. Unemployment is a social evil and should not be traded off against keeping inflation down when there are other policies available that would keep both down. We believe that our infrastructure needs public finance and should be as good as elsewhere in the Community. We need a society in which those who need help get it from those who can give it for the benefit of the community as a whole.

The Finance Bill does none of those things. Hon. Members can look in vain for the slightest iota of something to help the economy, help us get out of recession, help the unemployed, those who do not have a house in which to live and those whose children are being educated in over-large classes. They will find nothing on any of those matters and it is for that reason that I urge my hon. Friends to vote against the Bill.

7.29 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): As the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) said, this has been a short but interesting debate, notable not only for the range of subjects discussed within the curtilage of a Finance Bill but for three outstanding maiden speeches, to which I shall refer.

I hope that, in the short time that I intend to take winding up the debate, the House will permit me to start by paying my tribute to my predecessor, John Maples, who was widely recognised on both sides of the House as an affable man of great professional expertise and competence. From my short time in office, I know that he will be an extremely hard act to follow. I hope that his absence from the House is only an interlude and that he will be back with us soon.

I hope, if I am going to be tail-end Charlie in such debates, that I will do what Ministers replying to debates do not do enough—mention hon. Members who have spoken rather than making a further Second Reading speech. That, inevitably, will make my speech shorter than that of the hon. Member for Wrexham.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan), who broke the tradition of a non-controversial maiden speech by announcing that he was pro-hunting. It seemed that he was challenging my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) in trying to create an identity for his constituency, and I wish him well in calling for a return to Rutland's unitary status.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton rightly paid tribute to our friend, Michael Latham—a man of the highest integrity and a devout man of extremely good nature. Our deliberations will be poorer for his absence.

My hon. Friend made an extremely impressive speech and will make valuable contributions to our financial debates. I noted his remarks about inheritance tax, advanced corporation tax and the refunding rules on VAT, and he made some interesting remarks about the high debt-equity ratios of British companies. Although the Government's influence is limited, that is an interesting point for us to bear in mind in the wider formation of fiscal and monetary policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam), in his second maiden speech on returning to the House, asked us not to prolong the recession. I hope that we shall do nothing to prolong it. In this short Parliament, we have reduced interest rates, and my hon. Friend called for further reductions. Our policies are designed to achieve low inflation and low interest rates. I note what he said about a low-tax economy attracting foreign investment. One of the good aspects of our economic performance is the extent to which we are a haven for foreign investment. I am sure that that is welcomed by all hon. Members.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) on an outstanding maiden speech, in the great traditions of the House. He spoke about his predecessors, to which I add a personal word about Maureen Hicks, whom many Conservative Members regarded as an outstanding Member. We shall miss her, but we wish the hon. Gentleman well.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East made a compassionate and compelling speech. He spoke about the plight of pensioners and the infirm, and I note what he said about loans rather than grants from the Department of Social Security. He expressed concern about the restraints on local authorities' housing plans, and spoke with passion about the employment and unemployment problems of some of his constituents. We look forward to hearing further from him.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), responding to my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary, made particular reference to the size of the trade deficit, and dwelt on inheritance tax. Of course it is of concern that the current account and trade deficit is substantial, but we should not lose sight of the fact that exports have grown strongly, which deserves a welcome. Nor should we forget that the size of the deficit is containable.

The hon. Member's comments on inheritance tax showed more concern for the Labour party's old-fashioned attitudes to the accumulation and maintenance of large amounts of wealth than for the equity of the inheritance tax rules. The Government have received a public mandate and have taken early action significantly to offer relief on inheritance tax, which is extremely welcome, at least among Conservative Members.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) made a speech that had a familiar refrain for me, and perhaps we shall hear it again. He rightly emphasised the importance of controlling public expenditure—a theme emphasised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend).

I wish to assure my right hon. Friend and other Conservative Members that the Government intend to take the tightest control of public expenditure. It is absolutely essential if we are to deliver the prospects of economic regeneration and the electoral promises that we made at the general election that we contain public expenditure this year and in years to come. It is right that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury be given the support that was evident among Conservative Members tonight in the discussions that he is having on spending policies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington welcomed the Bill because its provisions on inheritance tax enable family firms and farms to be passed from one generation to another.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) was concerned that further moves to low inflation might mean deflation. I do not think that that necessarily follows. In the past, certainly in the early 1980s, inflation fell while the economy grew. The projections for reducing the underlying rate of inflation will not necessarily impair our prospects for growth. He emphasised the importance that he attaches to manufacturing industry, which I understand.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) complained that this was not a Budget for investment and that he would have preferred an increase in allowances rather than the introduction of the 20p band. That was a central plank of the Chancellor's Budget, which had considerable appeal to people who are within the tax net but are relatively low-paid, and it will bring valuable relief to many people. We have a public mandate for it, and we intend to press ahead with it.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed expressed concern about the Leeds case and about life assurance companies, which both involve, as he put it, aspects of retrospection. That is a contentious matter, to which we shall return in Committee, but we do not take the same line as him. We have a good relationship with the life assurance companies and hope to be able to discuss the content of the Bill's measures, but it is quite proper, given the size of the yield cost of some of the issues at stake, that we take legislative opportunities to put matters beyond question. Confirming past tax regimes is different from the retrospection that visits increased tax rates retrospectively.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) spoke of omissions from the Budget and the Finance Bill, of the housing problems that he perceives in his constituency and of the severity of unemployment. We contest that, because we believe that the Budget and the Bill form part of an overall economic strategy that will create jobs, sustainable growth and sound monetary policies. The evidence, the outlook and surveys of confidence suggest that that is already happening, and we believe that the Bill will encourage it still further.

My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) mentioned stamp duty, which was mentioned at Prime Minister's Question Time earlier today. I am aware that many hon. Members of all parties have been pressing either for an extension of the concession or for it to be continued permanently. At this maiden appearance at the Dispatch Box, I am afraid that I must tell them all firmly that that will not be possible. I have today answered a question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) making it clear that the Government will reintroduce the stamp duty rates in August this year.

The yield costs are considerable, and we cannot afford to ignore the impact on the borrowing requirements of Government. The cost of the concession alone is £400 million until August, and the cost of extending that concession for the rest of the financial year would be another £470 million. The cost of the concession for a whole financial year amounts to about £700 million. The total yield from stamp duty on houses amounts to almost £1·4 billion per year. We simply cannot ignore such money in the current equations on public expenditure.

If we wish to meet the public expenditure priorities we have set, we must also consider the fiscal as well as the borrowing side. That is why the temporary stamp duty relief must come to an end. I hope that the certainty that

[Mr. Anthony Nelson]

it will come to an end will act as a further boost in the intervening period to encouraging the purchases and transactions in properties up to the value of £250,000.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) spoke about transport, housing and employment problems in London. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London will home in especially on the problems of transport in London. It is now known that there is a Cabinet sub-committee on London, and for better or worse, I am the Treasury man on it. I will do my bit, short of coming up with substantial sums that it proposes to spend, to try to ensure that there are some useful ideas to try to get better value for money, more efficiency in public expenditure and higher-quality public services in transport, housing and employment for all the people in London.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) said that there were no signs of recovery, and called for a major increase in public investment. There is often a misconception about public investment. Investment means one person spending the money instead of another person spending it. If the Government spend that money, they have to take it from somebody who might be investing it better. The argument that must be deployed—to the House or to the public—for public expenditure, whether one raises it by borrowing or by tax, is that Government will spend it more effectively than those who would otherwise spend and save it.

Conservatives do not take that view. We believe in the plurality and judgment of the private sector. We believe in leaving more resources with people and with companies so that they can set their own priorities. In the words of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, the Budget and the Finance Bill

"mark a step in our constant drive to leave individuals and families with more of what they earn."—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 761.]

That is our intention, and we will stick to it. It is a pledge that gave us the support of the electorate. It is a Budget for recovery, and the Bill follows it through. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 308, Noes 256.

Division No. 20] **[7.43 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre Forest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'Frdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'l'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nicholas
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, James
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hepple, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoff
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
MacDonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick

Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Harold *(Don' C)*
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Clauses 19 and 20 be committed to a Committee of the whole House;

That the remainder of the Bill be committed to a Standing Committee;

That, when the provisions of the Bill considered, respectively, by the Committee of the whole House and by the Standing Committee have been reported to the House, the Bill be proceeded with as if the Bill had been reported as a whole to the House from the Standing Committee.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

7.57 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I rise briefly to put the arguments against the detail in the motion. For clauses 19 and 20 to be the only clauses to be considered on the Floor of the House rather diminishes the role that this House should have in full Committee on the Floor when considering the details of clause 52.

I will not make a speech about the merits of the issue. The House very infrequently goes in for retroactive legislation. As Front-Bench Members have said, that is normally done for the benefit of taxpayers. In this case, the proposals in clause 52 would mean that, whatever the courts decided in a judicial review case, Parliament would have to do what the Government say that it should have done two or three times before.

We should have a debate on clause 52 on the Floor of the House of Commons. If I do not succeed in blocking this committal motion by shaking my head vigorously when the Question is put, I hope that there will be a full debate on Report. I cannot rely on the Committee going any further than it did a year or so ago, when the issue was last considered.

Parliament should not believe that the Government have got away with it. In effect, they are going for hybridity, although the way in which the clause has been drawn would probably avoid it being technically hybrid. The issue will certainly arise when a building society takes the issue to the European courts, something that it can do only when all the domestic remedies have been exhausted.

As the House will recall, in this case the domestic remedies include the Government three times reversing the law as determined by the courts: twice after the courts determined that the Inland Revenue had got it wrong and once in advance of a likely decision.

The justification for the sledgehammer of clause 52 is that building societies paid £15,000 million in taxation over four years. I agree with my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury that £15,000 million is too much to have hanging at risk.

As the Government consider their stance for Standing Committee and for the Committee of the whole House, I hope that they will find a way to limit the affect of clause 52 so that it deals with only 99 per cent. of £15,000 million and leaves the claim to £57 million including interest to be determined either by the courts in a judicial review or by negotiations with the Government. I ask the House to support my contention that, one way or another, clause 52 should be aired in a full debate on the Floor of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Non-Domestic Rating Bill

Considered in Committee

[MR. GEOFFREY LOFTHOUSE *in the Chair*]

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

INCREASING NON-DOMESTIC RATES

8 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 21, leave out 'X is 100', and insert 'X is 95'.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means: With this it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 27, leave out '100', and insert '95'.

Mr. Jones: I move this amendment because the recession is continuing for most businesses and I want to push the Government a little further in helping businesses to survive the recession. I welcome the main thrust of the Bill. The amendment would increase help for people on transitional relief. The Government's calculations will lead to a real-terms increase of zero this year. I want to bring about a small cut in businesses' rates this year because increases in uniform business rate bills have recently been very large for many businesses, and have tipped many small businesses over the edge into bankruptcy. A small decrease in their bills this year could help some companies to survive.

Administration of the UBR has been chaotic in terms of the valuation process, appeals and administration of the transitional relief scheme, which has led to great anxiety and frustration among many businesses, particularly small businesses, at a very stressful time. With this amendment, I ask the Government to help those businesses to survive the recession.

If the Government are ever to provide extra help in the business rate arena, now is the time to do it, when many people think that we are still in recession. Although the Government have said before, during and after the election that they believe that we are coming out of recession, there is much evidence to show that the recession is continuing for most businesses and that a cut in the business rate would help. That evidence is that unemployment is still rising at an underlying trend of more than 30,000 a month, and that bankruptcies, mostly of unincorporated businesses, continue to rise. In the first three months of this year, there were 8,604 bankruptcies —an increase of 67 per cent. on the first quarter of last year.

Smaller businesses are going bust as fast as ever, and the Government's talk of recovery must mean absolutely nothing to such firms. The Government can send a message to small firms considering going into liquidation to keep going because help is on its way. Liquidations of larger companies are also increasing, although not quite so fast. In the first three months of this year, there were 5,835 such liquidations—an increase of 17 per cent. on the first quarter of last year.

There is evidence that the recession is still with us. I press the Minister to ask the Treasury for more money to help small businesses through this difficult period.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood): The Government are producing a generous package through the proposals that were announced in the Budget and are confirmed in the legislation. Our proposals will cost £400 million this year, £520 million the following year, and £325 million in the third year—a bumper package of £1,250 million or thereabouts for England as a result of the rate reductions. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may scoff, but that is extremely good news for businesses—very welcome news indeed. I should have thought that hon. Members would welcome it rather than cavil and laugh about those large sums of money which will give direct reductions in bills.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Redwood: I shall give way when I am ready to do so, but I have not finished dealing with the points that have been raised from a sedentary position and in a rather churlish manner.

The Liberal proposals for site value rating would be extremely bad news for business, assigning hypothetical values to sites on the basis that they could be redeveloped. What kind of recipe for small shopkeepers would that be? What would that do to the businesses for Cheltenham? The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) should do his homework before he pooh-poohs the excellent ideas in our legislation and before he recommends to the House the half-baked scheme that the Liberal Democrats have been talking about outside the House and have mentioned on Second Reading. *[Interruption.]* I am dealing with the amendment.

I cannot understand why the hon. Gentleman thinks that those who are losing from the revaluations should be given more favourable treatment than all those who are already paying at the full amount required by the valuations that are in practice. But that, of course, is what the Liberal Democrat amendment would do. It would positively discriminate in favour of those who, through transition, are having to increase their bills because of the revaluation, against those who are already paying the full amount required by the revaluation.

Of course, some of the revaluation increases were large because there was a very long gap between one valuation and another. Those anomalies are being corrected and, as I pointed out on Second Reading, some businesses in transition, being protected by the legislation, if passed, as well as by the transitional relief, may never have to pay the full amounts required by the 1990 valuation, because we shall have regular valuations from now on, and any decreases in value will be reflected in the subsequent valuation if that is true at that date.

I hope that the House will send the strong message to business today that it wants fast passage of the legislation to give the large amount of rebate to businesses which need relief from their rates. The costing of the hon. Gentleman's proposal, skewing things in favour of those under transitional arrangements, would be an additional £120 million in the current year. That, with the costing of the next item, would have to be added to the big Liberal Democrat plans to raise public borrowing, which would be likely to raise interest rates and other business costs.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: The Minister talks about a bumper package. Has he forgotten that the Government increased VAT by 2·5 per cent. as part of the incompetence of the

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

poll tax? That is yielding a substantial amount which could be redirected to businesses, many of which are suffering from a loss of markets because of the inflationary effect of the VAT increase. Have not the Government added to the recession by their own measures, in raising revenue which they should plough back in a simple and direct way which would reduce business costs?

Mr. Redwood: I have never heard the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) or his party argue for lower local authority expenditure. Had I done so, I should have been more sympathetic to his interventions, but it is always spend, spend and more spend. As we know, that requires taxation revenue to pay for it. We decided to reduce community charge bills across the country because people thought that they were high. We did that by cross-financing, out of an increase in VAT, which was a perfectly reasonable way of doing it.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will my hon. Friend the Minister press the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) further to see where the money currently coming from VAT would otherwise come from to support businesses that the hon. Gentleman's party seeks to support? The only way to do that would be to reimpose that amount on every community charge payer in the country. If that is the case, we should be told.

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend has made an extremely powerful point. Unless they make spending cuts, the Liberals would have to raise the tax from somewhere, or raise public borrowing.

Mr. Nigel Jones *indicated assent.*

Mr. Redwood: I see Liberal Members nodding in assent that they would raise public borrowing. Do they know what that would do to market sentiment, interest rates and businesses? The Government have systematically reduced interest rates in recent months. We should not want to see that upset by unreasonable increases in public borrowing wished upon us by the Liberal party.

The Chairman: Order. Before we go any further, I remind hon. Members that the Bill deals with non-domestic rates. I hope that hon. Members will bear that in mind.

Mr. Redwood: I accept your admonition, Mr. Lofthouse. I urge the House to reject the amendments.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): I do not know whether the Minister did it deliberately, but he certainly misrepresented the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) when he moved the amendment. My hon. Friend made it clear that we welcome the moves that the Government are making to give support to businesses and in particular to small businesses. My hon. Friend's amendment seeks to increase further the level of support that we believe needs to be given to small businesses across the country especially with the continuation of the recession brought about largely by measures taken by the Government.

In particular, we are keen to see additional support given to several areas of Britain which are heavily reliant on the small business sector. For example, as a result of the revaluation, my constituency had the second highest increase in business rates of all the English districts—13·3 per cent. compared with the English average of about 8·1 per cent. Such increases have had a significant effect on the level of the uniform business rate, which in turn affects the number of job losses. According to the figures produced by the House of Commons Library, unemployment in my constituency, where the UBR has increased significantly, rose by 113 per cent. between 1990 and 1992.

The Minister asked where the money will come from. Perhaps he will bear in mind the significant cost of unemployment. I hope that he will welcome the proposal in my hon. Friend's amendment to give additional support to small businesses. After all, his party originally claimed to be the party which supported small businesses. On that basis, I hope that the Minister will accept the amendment.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): As you rightly pointed out, Mr. Lofthouse, we are discussing amendments to the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The Opposition, as well as agencies and pressure groups outside the House, warned in 1988 that the Act would not benefit people generally in Britain, and in particular would not benefit small businesses.

The parts of the Act which referred to domestic ratepayers, subsequently poll tax payers, have been proved to be full of faults. After one year of operation in England and Wales, those parts of the Act were withdrawn. We are now dealing with non-domestic rating. The foolishness of the Government in introducing a national tax for businesses has been demonstrated beyond any shadow of doubt.

The amendments seek to make available additional money to help small businesses. I suggest that, if additional money is to be provided, it would be better distributed by allowing people who have difficulty in paying not to pay at all. Some form of rebate scheme should be available to help people over difficult periods, as the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) said. But any additional finance should be channelled to the people in greatest need. If money is available, we should consider a scheme to allow those who are having difficulty paying not to pay. Instead of a blanket cover, we should consider the principle that if people cannot pay they should not have to.

I support the Government's moves to help small businesses, but I ask Liberal Members to consider carefully that we ought to press the Government to make resources available to allow people having difficulty in paying the business rate not to do so. That would sustain small businesses much more than the proposal in the amendment. I cannot support the amendment. If the Government are considering making further money available, they should use it to help people who cannot pay. If people are having difficulty meeting the high charges, they should not pay.

Revaluations were carried out mainly when property costs were high. That is the real problem facing many small businesses. I suggest that the Liberals consider carefully that any additional money should be placed where the need is greatest. People should not pay rates if they cannot pay rates.

8.15 pm

Mr. Bowis: I am drawn to intervene by the preposterous proposal from the Liberal Benches that the level of value added tax should be restored, thereby placing a burden on

the community charge payer or, if any other way of raising the money was used, on the taxpayer. *[Interruption.]* That was the gist of the intervention of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). My hon. Friend the Minister replied, but we had no specific response from the Liberal party.

I speak for many community charge payers. I know that the Bill deals with non-domestic rates, but in passing I would mention that the £140 was of great value.

Mr. Chairman: Order. I should not bother in passing. I have already ruled on that. Stick to non-domestic rates.

Mr. Bowis: Then I shall pass on to the benefits that the Bill will produce. I want both the community charge payer and the non-domestic ratepayer to enjoy benefits. I represent an area of London which had to contribute considerably to the less well-off regions of Britain through the UBR system. Like the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), I welcome the Government's proposal to bring relief to business ratepayers. This is the way to do it. I am surprised that Liberal Members seek to delay the measure and do not go along with it wholeheartedly.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I hope that the hon. Gentleman understands the problem that Opposition Members have with his speech and that of the Minister. We do not disagree with the principle that the Government got rating and its replacement hopelessly wrong in the Local Government Finance Act 1988. We have no problem with that. We said that it was wrong at the time. We said that events and time would prove the Government wrong. That was obviously true on the domestic side and on the non-domestic side.

We also have no problem with the principle of occasionally making public money available by way of largesse. The principles according to which the money goes to a certain body of people should be clearly laid out. The problem is for the Government to say why and when they give public money to other people. The hon. Gentleman cannot simply get away with it by saying, "Oh, well, it was necessary to win the election."

Mr. Bowis: There is a slight difference of opinion between the second Labour Bench and the Labour Front Bench. I shall not go into that. I was merely agreeing with the Labour Front-Bench spokesman when he agreed with my hon. Friend the Minister that the Government's proposal was the way forward.

I ask the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones), who fairly expressed anxiety for small businesses, to tell the House what benefit would come to small businesses in London and the south-east from his party's policies to raise fuel taxes and introduce a land value tax which would decimate businesses and especially small businesses in my part of London.

Mr. Nigel Jones: In response to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), the benefit would be 5 per cent. off the rate bills for small businesses. That is what is so clean, simple and immediate about the amendment. I understand that the hon. Gentleman will vote against that if we press for a Division.

The Minister said that we were talking about extra borrowing, and I nodded. That is what we are talking about and I see nothing wrong with extra temporary borrowing to keep companies in business. Such tax cuts would not undermine Government finances in the long term. They could improve them if, by cutting taxes now, more businesses and enterprises survived and more people remained in useful, tax-paying employment.

These measures can be afforded in the short term and could strengthen the Government's finances in time. The Bill adopts the principle of funding temporary business tax cuts by temporary borrowing. As the Government have already accepted that principle, they can have no problem with the principles of our amendment. They may have a problem in finding the money to do it. It could be argued that the Government's finances cannot afford the amendment, but we must take up that debate with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whose present estimate of public sector borrowing for this year is £28 billion. Is it in fact worse than that?

I found the Minister's response disappointing and unsatisfactory, and I wish to press the amendment to a Division.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 22, Noes 168.

Division No. 21] **[8.21 pm**

AYES

Alton, David	Mackinlay, Andrew
Beith, A. J.	Maclennan, Robert
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Madden, Max
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Mahon, Alice
Cryer, Bob	Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Cummings, John	Skinner, Dennis
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*	Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*	Tyler, Paul
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*	Wicks, Malcolm
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*	
Llwyd, Elfyn	**Tellers for the Ayes:**
Loyden, Eddie	**Mr. Archy Kirkwood and**
Lynne, Ms Liz	**Mr. Simon Hughes.**

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan	Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Alexander, Richard	Couchman, James
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Amess, David	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Ancram, Michael	Day, Stephen
Arbuthnot, James	Deva, Niranjan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Devlin, Tim
Ashby, David	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Duncan, Alan
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*	Duncan-Smith, Iain
Baldry, Tony	Durant, Sir Anthony
Bates, Michael	Dykes, Hugh
Beresford, Sir Paul	Elletson, Harold
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Emery, Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard	Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Booth, Hartley	Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Boswell, Tim	Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*	Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Bowis, John	Faber, David
Brandreth, Gyles	Fabricant, Michael
Brazier, Julian	Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Bright, Graham	Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Fishburn, John Dudley
Browning, Mrs. Angela	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Burt, Alistair	Forth, Eric
Butler, Peter	Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Butterfill, John	Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*	Freeman, Roger
Carrington, Matthew	French, Douglas
Carttiss, Michael	Gallie, Philip
Chaplin, Mrs Judith	Gardiner, Sir George
Chapman, Sydney	Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Clappison, James	Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Coe, Sebastian	Gorst, John
Colvin, Michael	Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Congdon, David	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Hague, William

Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Wood and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Amendment accordingly negatived.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3

DECREASING NON-DOMESTIC RATES

8.30 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 2, line 29, after first 'in', insert '1992 and'.

The amendment relates to other types of businesses which have benefited from the uniform business rate. The Government's clause speeds up the reductions in rate bills for those who will benefit and ensures that, by 1993-94, such business ratepayers will obtain their full reductions. Our amendment will give them all those gains this year. We support what the Government have done, but we would like to push them a bit further.

Mr. Redwood: I urge the House to reject the amendment as it is not well targeted and it is an expensive proposal. It will cost £475 million in the current year, and the hon. Gentleman has not said where that money might come from, whether he is proposing some compensating tax increase or yet more borrowing with possible dangers for interest rates, which would damage the businesses that he is setting out to help.

I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman has reconsidered his remarks on Second Reading when he said:

"It is possible that the Government's measure is more effectively targeted"—[*Official Report*, 19 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 216.]

than the Liberal one. I urge the hon. Gentleman to reaffirm that. Our measures are exceptionally well targeted to deal with the problems that arose from revaluation and to add to the transitional relief that we set out previously.

I urge the House to support the Bill as unamended and, thus, to reject the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 4 to 10 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

8.35 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I remind hon. Members that the Bill is necessary for the Government to bring about the proposals made in the Budget to amend the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as it relates to transitional arrangements governing increases and decreases in non-domestic rate bills. Clause 2 limits the increases in rates to business rate payers to no more than the rate of inflation, which, in the current year, is 4·1 per cent.

Any action by the Government to amend and improve the iniquitous 1988 Act and to improve the quality of life of those people affected by it will always receive the support of the Labour party. That was made clear by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on Second Reading. Sadly, the principle of clause 2 does not apply to poll tax payers in general, because it covers non-domestic properties. The Bill, with its 10 clauses, significantly amends the 1988 Act, but it is a pity—I refer to the rebate scheme—that it does not consider the abolition of the 20 per cent. rule for poll tax payers.

We are witnessing, as we have witnessed in the past, with the abolition of that part of the 1988 Act which referred to poll tax payers, the failure of the Government and of the Conservative party to provide a reasonable system of local government finance. We are reminded that taxpayers are paying dearly for that Act. I remember clearly how the current Secretary of State for the Environment fought hard in Committee and in the House, supported by the Minister of State and other Tory Members, to introduce that Act and to implement it. We are now witnessing the results of that bad legislation, because this Bill has had to be introduced to amend it.

The Government's proposals—in 1990, following the passage of the Local Government Finance Act 1988—were doomed to failure from the start. My hon. Friends and I, along with the present President of the Board of Trade, said that the whole scheme would fail, and tonight we are seeing some of the results of that failure.

We must now give urgent consideration to the whole issue of compensating local authorities, because the cost to them of re-billing will be very expensive indeed. The Department of the Environment has suggested that the

re-billing cost per unit will be about 85p per transaction. On Second Reading, the Under-Secretary of State promised that the national non-domestic rate

"pool will be fully compensated for any reduction in the rate yield that is due to the Bill. Local authorities will be allowed to net off reasonable costs of re-billing from NNDR payments. We shall look carefully at any evidence from authorities that NNDR payments in the first month of the year have not kept pace with the profile of payments to the Department set at the beginning of the year, and we shall consider adjustments if they prove necessary."—[*Official Report*, 19 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 226.]

There is clear evidence that there has been delay in payments in the first month of the year by small businesses. That has happened in anticipation of what would result from the announcement in the Budget. It was natural that people would react in that way, having been told that there would be a change in the rate demand. In turn, local authorities face a cash flow problem as a result of rates not being paid in the first month of the year as well as in May. I trust that the Minister accepts that the plight of local authorities, because of their cash flow difficulties, must be considered. That state of affairs has come about because of the announced rebate scheme.

Wakefield district council has made a careful cost-per-unit study for re-billing purposes. It has estimated that the cost will be nearer £2 per unit than the 85p suggested by the Department of the Environment. The costing done by Wakefield took every detail of the exercise into account.

The Minister must also accept that, when a relatively small number of bills must be redistributed, as will happen in Wakefield's case—the figure will be about 2,000—there will be no post office reduction for delivery charges. The formula suggested by the Department in discussions with local authority associations took into account a benefit for local authorities resulting from a post office discount for additional billing. That is another factor pointing to the way in which the Department of the Environment has got its re-billing average costs wrong.

Because of the way in which the Government have handled the whole rebate issue, many local authorities, including Wakefield, are finding that, in addition to going through the process of printing and issuing the original bill, they must add to the bill an amendment covering the rebate, explaining how it came about. That must be done by Government directive. Because it is not necessarily possible to include all that information on the one bill, additional work has had to be undertaken by local authorities, much of it involving manual work. That additional activity has been carefully costed by Wakefield's finance department.

I hope that the Minister will look carefully at the additional problems faced by local authorities. It is clear that the formula originally put out by the Department is inadequate in relation to the information that local authorities are having to provide as part of the re-billing procedure. There is every reason for the Department to re-examine the matter——

Mr. Redwood *indicated assent.*

Mr. O'Brien: —and I gather that the Minister agrees that further examination is required.

Mr. Redwood: It might help if I tell the hon. Gentleman at this juncture in the debate that we are consulting the local authority associations on our estimates of the re-billing cost. They were based on community charge re-billing costs, about which we knew. We shall, of course, also take into account any representations that the hon. Gentleman may make, because we want to arrive at a fair and sensible figure.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister will have before him the figures that have been supplied to me by Wakefield district council and the reasons why that council considers that the Department is totally out of touch with the problems being faced by local authorities.

We must not forget that, in addition to the re-billing exercise, local authorities are still having to contend with the poll tax that is still in place. In other words, in addition to the poll tax recovery programme—the resources involved in that process are extensive in many areas—local authorities are having to maintain the register and handle inquiries about rebates and so on. Local resources are stretched to the maximum because of the need for authorities to carry on with business as normal, in addition to recovering the poll tax and maintaining the register. I hope that the Minister will take that matter into account also.

I am sure that the local authority associations will make those and other points to him when he meets them. I, too, will be giving him my views about the reconsideration that is necessary by the Department of the work that local authorities are having to face because of the re-billing exercise.

An organisation called the Forum of Private Business has made representations to the Department about the way in which the problems facing small businesses need reconsideration. The Bill introduces a scheme to help small businesses over the next three years, until the implementation in April 1995 of rates based on the revaluation that will take place next year. The Forum of Private Business has asked, because there is such a long time between valuations, that the Government, instead of making minor adjustments to help small businesses get over certain problems, look at long-term solutions for helping small businesses. In the interests of these small businesses, we should be introducing a policy to sustain local businesses. The way to do that is via a rebate scheme.

I put to the Minister the argument made by the Forum of Private Business. Small businesses are extensive. Some 5 million provide employment and wealth. They are the seedcorn of future development. Therefore, it is important that any action taken by the Government should be on a long-term basis rather than a minor operation to get them over a difficult period—in this case, the high reassessment of properties and the protracted recession.

In the two years 1985-87, small firms created 500,000 jobs, so we are talking about a large part of our community. Small firms employ over one third of the private sector work force. They produce nearly a quarter of our turnover. We support the Bill because it helps, albeit in a minor way, these small firms.

The Association of District Councils has produced a report called "Small Firms in Britain", which draws attention to the remarkable growth of small firms through the 1980s. If we are to sustain that growth, it is important that help to small firms is on a long-term basis.

Mr. Redwood: Can the hon. Gentleman clarify the size of the scheme that he has in mind? How many firms and

[Mr. Redwood]

what sort of money does he think should be given by way of reduction of rates bills to small firms? This would put some flesh on the bones that he is setting out.

Mr. O'Brien: Firms would be judged on their ability to pay. This must be done through the local authority, because this is a national tax on business. We consider that to be wrong and the Institute of Directors shares that view. I have here a document from it, published on 18 May 1992, which I am sure that the Minister will have received as well. It says:

"Whilst the Bill addresses a short-term problem arising from the transition of the UBR and 1990 rateable values coinciding with the recession, it does not remove the need for longer term reform. The Government has still to produce a clear vision of the proper role of local government, without which it is impossible to decide the most appropriate division of responsibilities between central and local government, the most appropriate structure of local government and the most appropriate method of financing local government (the IOD favours a reduced role) but with the local government sector having greater autonomy".

The Institute of Directors has it right. There should be greater involvement of local authorities in helping small businesses.

We are not saying that a figure should be put on the rebate or what the reduction on rates should be. That is why, when the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) moved the Liberal Democrat amendment, I said that additional resources should be channelled to those people who have difficulty in meeting rate bills. The Forum of Private Business has reported that the largest single cost upon small businesses is rent and rates. If we are to help these people, we should take into consideration what they are saying and they are saying that rates are too high. A rebate scheme would help them.

Mr. Bowis: Will the hon. Gentleman elaborate a little on his policy? As I understasnd it, he seeks ultimately the abolition of the present system and a return to the rating system. He also advocates the abolition of capping. Therefore, he is advocating an open-ended commitment to a rebate for small businesses, because there is no capping of the amount that can be imposed by councils on the businesses in their areas.

Mr. O'Brien: The hon. Gentleman is the first to mention capping. I was referring to a rebate scheme for businesses that find it difficult to pay their rates. That should be done by agreement between local authorities and small businesses. Business and domestic ratepayers should agree with the local authority on the level of services that they demand, and what they are prepared to pay for those services. I am against capping of local authorities, because I believe that the level of services should be decided in that way.

Mr. Bowis: The Labour party has said that it would organise the rates so that there was a ratio between domestic and non-domestic rates. Therefore, the commitment is open-ended. How much money is the hon. Gentleman suggesting should be in the rebate fund?

Mr. O'Brien: I am saying, and I repeat——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I hesitate to intervene, but the hon. Gentleman is referring to much that is not in the Bill. I hope that he will confine his remarks to what is in the Bill.

Mr. O'Brien: My remarks are at all times directed to small businesses. That is why, in response to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), I said that there was no set level for the rebate. That would be a matter for agreement between small businesses and their local authorities. It would be based primarily on a business's level of income. Therefore, one cannot put a figure on the amount. If additional resources are to be made available and if the Government are contemplating long-term programmes to help small businesses, that is the way that they should approach the matter.

I am not alone in making that point. In Committee, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) referred to the same principle. He said:

"We have heard a number of examples of some people who are well off and who vote but will not have to pay because they are exempt. We have heard other examples of people with no money but who will have to pay. That underpins the argument that many of us have put forward. The way to get round the anomalies and exemptions is to link the whole thing to the ability to pay."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 28 January 1988; c. 208.]

Any small business should have its rates linked to its ability to pay. That should be the result of a contract between local authorities and the small businesses. That is borne out by the Institute of Directors, the Association of District Councils and the Forum of Private Business. All those organisations make the same point. They are not members or supporters of the Labour party. I doubt whether the Forum of Private Business is affiliated to any political party. The Government should take note of what they are saying.

Therefore, when the Minister is considering long-term support for small businesses he should consider the observations made by the Institute of Directors, the Association of Local Authorities, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of District Councils, the Association of County Councils, the Forum of Private Business and other pressure groups which are telling the Government that the 1988 Act is not working and that this minor Bill will not resolve the long-term problem that small businesses face. I also ask him to consider carefully the problems that local authorities are facing as a result of the Bill.

9.1 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones: I assure the Minister that we on the Liberal Democrat Bench welcome the moves made in the Bill. Any help for small businesses is good news. Small businesses are the life blood of our country, and without them we would not be a successful nation.

The uniform business rate has been a disaster—almost as much of a disaster for many businesses as the poll tax was for many individuals. The Local Government Finance Act 1988 will go down as one of the worst pieces of legislation that the Government have introduced in their long term in office. We welcome the moves made in the Bill, but we regret that the Government have been unable to go any further.

9.2 pm

Mr. Morgan: I want briefly to mention certain aspects of the Bill that have not yet been fully covered. As the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) said, the Bill is an attempt to plaster over the problems caused by the hideous errors perpetrated by Nicholas Ridley, a previous Secretary of State for the Environment. The Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Amendment) Bill 1991 —Ridley was wrong mark 1—attempted to do for domestic rates what this Bill—Ridley was wrong mark 2 —attempts to do for the business rate.

All those who voted for the community charge legislation—that is the first time that I have used the phrase "community charge": as a member of the human race, I usually call it the poll tax. One can usually tell whether Conservative Members are members of the human race by whether they use the phrase "community charge" or "poll tax". It is a simple litmus test. The Minister is clearly not a member of the human race. Several times tonight he has referred to the community charge, even though it is dead. Perhaps one day he will join us.

A problem arises with business rates when a revaluation occurs at the top of a particular type of economic cycle —such as that from 1986 to 1988, which marked the high tide of Thatcherism. The runaway boom of that period affected in particular the retail, commercial, and property development sectors—but it has since gone into reverse.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying rather wide. The Bill concerns the business rate and has nothing to do with the economics of the past, booms, or anything of that nature. I shall be grateful if the hon. Gentleman will stick to the Bill.

Mr. Morgan: I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The purpose of my introductory remarks was to illustrate that the Bill would not be required but for the problems that arise when a revaluation occurs at the top of a particular type of highly biased and probably never to be repeated economic cycle, which causes particular problems to fall on the small business and retail sector in south-east England.

The high values originally set must now be adjusted downwards by the Bill, to meet a situation that could occur in any subsequent revaluation, in any decade. If a particular business sector or region is booming at the time a revaluation is made, the figure will be wrong. When the cycle reverses three or four years later, the companies will say, "We shall go bankrupt, or you will lose the election because we shall vote against you."

In 1990, the Government abandoned their 1988 legislation, saying, "For gawd's sake, someone bung small businesses a few bob, and see if they will still vote Tory in the next election." Some of them did and some did not —but enough of them voted Tory to return a Conservative Government, and now they are trying to undo the legislation introduced by Mr. Ridley, which was voted for almost sheeplike by so many Conservative Members.

Extraordinarily high values were placed on shops and offices in the south-east, but extremely low values were placed on factories—particularly in the north. The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) said that the shops in his constituency had been knocked for six. That is the inevitable consequence of the timing of the revaluation, which occurred in the middle of the 1986-88 shopping boom. Everyone thought that there would be more shops and high-value boutiques of the type characteristic of towns such as Bath and Cheltenham which suck in tourists and casual travellers. When that cycle reverses and the economy goes bust instead, the business men cannot possibly continue paying high rates. One must have a measure which allows special contributions, to save such businesses from massive bankruptcies.

Are the Government telling us tonight that they are offering not just a short-term, papering-over-the-cracks solution, but one that will meet the boom-or-bust economic cycle that has benefited shops and offices in the south-east in the past, but which has now reversed and is moving the country's economic motor away from retailing, property development, as can be seen at Canary Wharf, and the south-east region to other regions of the country? It is not good enough for the Government to say, "This year, we'll give them a few bob. This year, we'll produce a one-off measure to refund the system that we put in place in 1988." This country and its local government must have a predictable, calculable, and fair system of raising money from domestic and business rates.

Ministers have not said a word today about how they have solved the medium-term problem, or how they propose to do so. All we have heard is, "Let's plaster over the cracks made by the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the changes introduced in 1990. Please do that, just for now." Small businesses are screaming, bankruptcies are sweeping the country, and shops, hotels, computer centres, business parks and all the other parts of the economy that were booming five or six years ago are now experiencing a severe slump. Some way must be found to reduce the tax burden which was set at the peak of the economic cycle back in 1987-88.

We still want to hear some apology for the mistakes that the Government made when they 'nationalised' this aspect of local government finance in the 1988 Act. We want them to explain how they intend to lay out principles which will enable finance officers, finance committees and local councillors to see the way ahead, and to plan a reasonable level of expenditure without hanging on Ministers' every word each year, because they need to be able to plan more than three or four months ahead—beyond the next Minister's speech.

We also want a promise from the Government that there will be no more of the nonsense that we have been hearing lately. For instance, we do not want the owners of offices to be so terrified of the non-domestic rate that they expect to be stuck with that they strip their offices and remove all usable equipment, thus avoiding payment of any rate. Back in the industrial slump of 1980-82, factory owners in the west midlands were taking the roofs off their factories to avoid paying business rates, and the same could happen with Canary Wharf—Tarzan's very own tree, if I may refer briefly to the President of the Board of Trade. What would happen if huge new developments stripped their offices, rendering them unusable? Apart from the reduction in asset values, an additional burden would then fall on other business rate payers.

The Government have got themselves into an unholy mess since 1988 as a result of their arrogance. I have not yet observed any signs, from the Minister or from Conservative Back Benchers, that any lesson has been learned from that mess.

9.12 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I shall speak mainly about Wales, as I did on Second Reading. I am sure that the Minister is aware of the problems that affect the Principality, but if he is not, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will no doubt draw them to his attention.

On Second Reading, the Opposition emphasised their main caveat on the Bill. We wish to do the same this evening, albeit briefly. We shall, of course, support the Bill, because business people throughout England and Wales will be better off as a result of the changes it makes. The consequences of the 1988 Act were, generally speaking, disastrous, both in regard to the poll tax and for many small businesses. I hope that the Bill will go a small way towards alleviating those difficulties.

We must always remember, however, that the two sides of the House differ to a significant extent on what is and what is not a business rate, or a business tax. The Opposition believe that the present system is a business tax; we also believe that a business rate should be raised locally, spent locally and locally accountable, on the basis that finance is the essence of local democracy. The combination of the business rate that we are discussing and the proposed council tax—which will be with us in 1993—means that only a small percentage of the income now derived by local authorities will be raised locally. That is not good for democracy or for local government, and it is not particularly good for those who have to pay local taxes. Local government is at serious risk if its revenue-raising powers are taken away. Although the Bill is important, we do not support the principles that underlie it.

My hon. Friends the Members for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) and for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) referred to a number of practical problems with the Bill. I hope that the Minister will refer to them when he winds up the debate. Arrears are building up at an alarming rate in many local authorities in England and Wales as a result of the introduction of the business rate. In addition, many local authorities, including some in Wales, face the serious problem of non-payment of the business rate. Many people believe the business rate does not have to be paid until the Bill has gone through all its legislative stages.

I appreciate that payment of the business rate will be backdated, but many business people do not appear to do so. Therefore, the Government should make it absolutely clear how non-payment of the business rate will harm local authorities. The income of many local authorities has been seriously affected. The loss of interest as a result of non-collection particularly harms those parts of the country that can least afford it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton referred to computer systems and said that a number of local authorities have had to resort to manual systems to deal with the changes that have already been made and that are about to be made with regard to the business rate. I hope that the Government will provide practical help to local authorities, in the form of both software and hardware. I hope, too, that there will be closer liaison between local authorities, the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office to overcome those practical problems and to deal with the difficult area of local government finance that local authorities will have to face up to during the next eight months.

The changes will cost £25 million in Wales alone. In addition, there will be many administrative costs. On 1 April 1993, local authorities will have to introduce the brand new council tax. The practical difficulties caused by the combination of the two tax changes will lead to considerable strains on local government finance and on manpower and the way that they deal with their business.

The Government should think carefully about the fact that they have postponed discussion in the House of the rate support grant settlement for both England and Wales as a direct result of the instability that these changes have caused. Furthermore, the standard spending assessment is very difficult for laymen and experts to understand. On top of that, local authorities are faced with capping. All these issues with which the Bill deals means that there could be considerable instability and, in some local authorities, financial chaos in the months ahead, unless the local authority associations and the two Government Departments that are responsible for them get together quickly to solve it.

When I look at local government finance in 1992, I wonder whether it is any more stable and any less chaotic or difficult to understand than it was a quarter of a century ago when we discussed, in Green Papers, royal commissions and so on, the changes that we needed to make to local government finance. Nothing much has changed.

There is a Welsh dimension that is different from the English. It seems that there is to be no local government reform of any substance in England. However, the Secretary of State for Wales has said that he intends to go ahead with the main changes in local government reform that he announced before the general election. Those changes in council tax and business tax must be coupled with the fact that there might be substantial changes in the structure and nature of local government in the Principality in the next two years. Those changes will be so dramatic that the county council elections might be abandoned and the two tiers of local government merged into one system of unitary authorities.

Local authorities are expected to budget properly for their respective areas during the next few weeks and months. How can they do that properly with all the uncertainty, instability and changes in transitional relief that have been thrust upon them in recent months and years?

I believe that the Bill is relatively meaningless unless it is seen in the context of all the other changes that will be put upon the people of Wales in the next year. My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton and my other hon. Friends believe that there must be a settling down period in local government, particularly local government finance. We have seen too many changes in the past few years. Some of those changes, such as the poll tax, have been catastrophic and calamitous.

Mr. Morgan: Too much polyfilla and not enough bricks and mortar.

Mr. Murphy: My hon. Friend is right.

The controversial council tax that will be in place in the next few months does not help. There have been disputes over valuations and there will be even more disputes when the appeal tribunals become operative after the council tax has been set up. The business rate is constantly changing and the rules are altering all the time. That means that the

business community is fast losing confidence in the way in which it has to pay its taxes or rates. The credibility of our local government system is now at stake. During the next few months before the summer recess I urge, and beg the Minister to talk seriously to local government in England and Wales about the problems of instability facing local authorities. If he does not, I fear for the future.

9.22 pm

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) began by saying that the Bill is a significant amendment to the Local Government Finance Act 1988. He concluded by saying that it is a trifling proposal, or words to that effect. In that, he was echoed by his hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). Let me clarify what we are doing and what we agree and disagree about.

The Government are improving the basis of the transitional relief scheme so that businesses can obtain relief from their bills, especially those which faced largish increases over a number of years as a result of the revaluation. We are not changing the fundamental base of business rates introduced by the 1988 legislation, which was to give businesses the pledge that the poundage would not rise by more than the rate of inflation.

That remains the fundamental divide between the Government and the Opposition. We are saying to businesses that, once the valuations are stabilised, as they will be when transitional relief is fully exhausted and worked through, nobody's bill will increase by more than the rate of inflation. Business never enjoyed such benefits under a Labour Government and when there was a scheme which allowed Labour and Liberal local authorities to impose their own level of business rates in each locality.

Mr. William O'Brien: On Second Reading, the Minister said that, there was a possibility that the transitional relief system may not be achieved by businesses because it may be influenced by revaluation next year. He has just said that, when the transitional relief system has been exhausted, we shall be back to a level of no more than the rate of inflation. How does he reconcile those two comments? Perhaps he will tell us why he has changed his mind since 19 May.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman should listen. I said that the rate of inflation would apply to the poundage being charged, and that a stable valuation base was necessary for people to enjoy that benefit in their bills. The lack of a stable valuation base and the long gap between revaluations led to our introducing transitional relief to ensure that increases would not be too great. We are offering more generous treatment this year. In the Budget, we recognised that some businesses were under cash flow pressures, and this is one of a package of measures to give additional relief.

The big divide between the Labour and Conservative parties is that we are offering the pledges of regular revaluations to avoid the problem of a big backlog—and a big jump as a result—in the change in valuations, and the poundage will not rise by more than the rate of inflation. Labour is proposing a return to a system whereby Labour and Liberal local authorities can choose to increase rates by the amount they wish. They are saying that business should pay and pay again if a local authority chooses to tax it.

Where are the Opposition's proposals to improve accountability and to give business a vote and some influence over council decisions? I see no proposals at all. We have offered protection to business, because we believe in it, and we want it to flourish.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Minister agree that the logical consequence of that argument is that local government raises no revenue?

Mr. Redwood: That is not the logic of the argument. At the beginning of the next financial year, we shall introduce an accountable local tax to raise revenue. Individuals will, rightly, have the vote and will have more influence over what their local authorities can choose to spend. Elections will be held on how much value councils get for the money that they spend and how much money they are raising within the generous overall controls of capping, which will apply where we feel that people need to be protected from the extremes of Labour or Liberal authorities.

Mr. Murphy: Perhaps I can put it another way. Only 11 per cent. of the income of Welsh local authorities is raised locally. That cannot be right for democracy. If 90 per cent. is raised centrally, will not 100 per cent. eventually be raised by central Government?

Mr. Redwood: There is no proposal before the House to abolish all local taxation. The House recently passed legislation confirming the council tax, with all its details worked out from the centre, which needed to be worked out a year in advance so that councils would have time to build the computer programs and get on with planning a smooth transition.

I hope that the Labour party will calm down about local taxation and will recognise that this fair proposal has been modified following consultation and that the council tax should be the means of raising local incomes so that local democracy, in which I hope both sides believe, can have full rein. I look forward to seeing the proposals of the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) for a massive increase in the amount of money raised locally from individuals, which now seems to be what his party is implying. It would be interesting to all those facing their council tax bills next year to hear that the Labour party does not think that they pay a big enough proportion and would like to see more money raised from them.

The hon. Member for Normanton has not answered my point about accountability for business.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister appears to forget that his Government increased VAT to help to pay for local government finance. Will he assure us that there will be no further increases in VAT to finance local government? The Minister should remember that his Government increased VAT, which affects everyone. We are saying that local taxation should be based on the ability to pay.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was very clear on VAT in the general election campaign, and I have nothing to add to his very clear statement. It is a cheap and silly debating trick for the hon. Member for Normanton to introduce that point.

The Conservative party is firmly behind the council tax, which will go in on time. The Labour party should have the decency to say, "Yes, we will live and work with that system because here is an opportunity for local democracy"—in which it claims to believe—"and for an

[Mr. Redwood]

independent source of local finance based on property". That is what the Labour party wanted, although it never had a sensible, workable proposal which bore examination or stood up to proper scrutiny.

The big divide between Labour and Conservative in the House is over whether or not we offer business some protection from large and specific increases in poundage in particular localities. We say that we should, that we do and that we will. The fundamental principle of the 1988 legislation is not challenged by the Bill.

The Liberal Democrats wish to go over to site valuation, which would be ruinous to many small businesses in the south. I hope that one day someone will write a good analysis of how bad an impact that would have, so that all can see what an absurd idea the Liberal Democrats support.

Mr. Morgan: The Minister says that the Bill does not breach the principles of the 1988 legislation. I remember sitting in this same spot when Mr. Ridley explained the virtues of the legislation, especially in respect of the business rate. He said that the entire transitional relief scheme would be self-financing. The Bill involves Exchequer financing. How can the Minister sit there, with his usual straight face, and tell the House that the Bill is not a breach of the fundamental principle of the business rate for which he voted? All the sheeplike Back-Bench Conservative Members voted for that as well.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman keeps shifting his ground because he cannot win on the ground that he chooses first. The big principle is whether local authorities are left with the discretion to increase taxes in any way that they like on businesses which do not have the direct relationship with them through the vote which individuals have. On the question of Exchequer funding, I have already explained that the purpose of the Bill is to bring before the House the part of the Budget measures which allocate more moneys from general taxation and from public borrowing to help the business sector. That is perfectly reasonable in the context that I have described.

We want to offer more cash flow help to business, and we have decided to make the terms of the transitional relief scheme, which were always part of the original proposals, more generous. I thought that the two major parties agreed on that, and I hope that the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) will now see that it is reasonable to offer that additional assistance—*[Interruption.]* I said clearly that the big principle in the 1988 legislation was whether local authorities had the right to increase bills themselves in any way they saw fit—*[Interruption.]* That was the principle that the Labour party has tried to establish in the debate—*[Interruption.]* That is the principle that we have opposed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I am having great difficulty hearing the Minister because of sedentary remarks. I should be grateful if the whole House would listen to the Minister.

Mr. Redwood: You are very courteous and helpful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Opposition Members are a little rattled because they are not making any progress in their rather weak arguments tonight.

I will repeat some helpful points for Opposition Members. I and my officials will study carefully any representations made by Opposition Members on the question of re-billing costs and the cash flow to local authorities. I take up the point mentioned by the hon. Member for Torfaen. The position has been made very clear. Businesses should carry on paying the instalments and bills that they have received until such time as the rebilling exercise has been completed, assuming the safe passage of the Bill through both Houses and Royal Assent.

I am grateful to Opposition Members who have done their bit to help to speed the legislation. The best help that we can all offer business is to ensure the smooth and rapid passage of the Bill through the House so that the rebilling exercise can be carried out quickly and effectively and so that people get the benefit of the legislation as promptly as possible.

We shall, of course, study any cost analysis that the hon. Member for Torfaen may have on a reduction in rebilling costs. We have a basis for our own calculations and we are consulting the local authority associations. I reaffirm a point I made in other forums in answer to the hon. Member for Torfaen. We intend to consult and liaise closely with individual local authorities and with local authority associations. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I have already met the local authority associations on more than one occasion since we took over our present tasks.

I have recently toured different parts of the country to meet local authority representatives, and I intend to do as much of that as time and business pressures permit. I like to see for myself what is happening on the ground, to listen to the views of local authority officers of all political persuasions and to meet people in my offices in Whitehall and here in Westminster.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West attacked the system when he said that it was not calculable or predictable. That is exactly what a national business rate with a specified rate of increase in poundage will be when compared to Labour's system where the poundage would move around as well as the valuations. The more regular the revaluations, the more stability there will be from the valuations. The successful completion of a quinquennial review will help to stabilise the system compared to the long gap in the previous case.

The hon. Member for Torfaen was worried about the degree of change and stability in the system. There are changes in local government at the moment. However, my predecessors made a sensible point of passing legislation and setting out the main points of the council tax as early as possible, thus leaving people with more than a year in which to plan against the background of that legislation and the main principles of the proposals now coming before us for final implementation.

With regard to structure reform, I was not sure whether the hon. Member for Torfaen suggested that he admired the Welsh model and not the English model or the other way around. He seemed to argue it both ways. Let me reassure him that the Government do not lack enthusiasm for a sensible reform of local government in England as well. I hope that we shall shortly announce more proposals to flesh out the details that have already been passed in legislation. They will make it clear that there will be a structure review in the English shire regions which will start soon when we can make the necessary arrangements and announcements.

Mr. William O'Brien: I have listened carefully to the Minister's response. I referred to the Forum for Private Business; I am sure that the Minister has received a copy of the circular that I have received, in which the chief executive states that the forum is prepared to work with the Government in respect of small firms. He also states:

"This is a critical time for small firms, many of whom are suffering cash flow problems with less support from the banks."

It is not just a matter of rents and rates. Other issues are involved with regard to the cash flow of small firms. Will the Minister consider what the forum for small businesses has said and, if necessary, will he enter into discussions and listen to what the forum has to say about the important issue of cash flow?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment who is responsible for local government affairs will meet the forum on 1 July if all goes according to plan. He will listen carefully to what its members have to say. Several Ministers over many months have listened to what the forum has had to say. They have read its surveys and have had meetings with representatives. Undoubtedly, the forum helped to influence the Chancellor's and the Government's decision to announce a package of measures in the Budget to help business cash flow of which this Bill is but one.

The voice of business through the forum and through other channels of communication to Government does not go unheard. I promise that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will meet the forum soon and that he will listen to those specific points. The hon. Member for Normanton should bear in mind that we have announced and are carrying through a substantial package of relief from business rate increases which we hope that the forum and other small business representative groups and small businesses themselves will welcome.

I trust that the House will give a swift passage to this legislation. The Bill will be very welcome in the business community, and I hope that it will receive its Third Reading without any further Division.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

9.38 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you have had a request from the Leader of the House to make a statement about the legislation that is to be considered in Committee tomorrow, in view of the delightful and welcome news that it appears that the Danish people have very sensibly voted against the Maastricht treaty. If that is the case, it means that the whole of the treaty paraphernalia will collapse and that the business which is to occupy the House for the next two days will be completely wasted. Therefore, it would seem sensible for the Leader of the House to make an early business statement so that we may take into account the good news from Denmark.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I confirm to the hon. Gentleman that I have heard nothing about that matter, but I imagine that members of the Government have listened to him.

Water Charges

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

9.39 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I wish to raise the issue of general directions to OFWAT, the Office of Water Services, in regard to water charges. First, I should like to explore the residual relationship between the Minister's responsibilities and those of OFWAT, to explore the extent of the Minister's responsibility for water and sewerage services on behalf of the public, and secondly I should like to establish the role of the Director General of Water Services under the Water Act 1989 in defending the public interest.

There is wide concern at present at the extent to which the water and sewerage industry appears to lack accountability or responsibility not just to Ministers and to the House but to the general public. I wish to explore for a few minutes who now defends the public interest in relation to water charges, who now sets the criteria for charging policy, and who now ensures that the national investment objectives, which in the past were undertaken with a system of equalisation grants between the richer and poorer parts of the country, are met. I want also to examine how precisely OFWAT and the Director General of Water Services operate within the ministerial direction.

As the House will recall, when the legislation was first prepared and considered in this place, it was assumed that the so-called K factor would be a negative sign. It was assumed that it would be possible to allow charges which would increase by less than the annual rate of inflation. In fact, with the dramatic change in the obligations that were laid upon the industry, especially by the European Community bathing and drinking water quality directives, the K factor had to be plus from the first time that it was used.

It was originally assumed, when the legislation was being prepared, that a 10-year interval between reappraisals of the K factor arrangements would be sufficient with just a half-time check at the fifth year. In practice, the pressure has been on for intermediate assessment. There have already been a number of changes, even during the short period since the Act came into force. I shall return to a specific example—that of South West Water—to illustrate the major change that has taken place in that area.

With those major changes in the circumstances which have inevitably led to major changes in the assumptions on which the calculations are made, there is necessarily a complete reappraisal of the role of OFWAT and indeed ministerial responsibility for giving directions to OFWAT.

The Director General of Water Services has been juggling with a large number of variables—capital programmes, revenue expectations, borrowing requirements, European Community obligations, and profit and dividend levels. Clearly, the Director General, Mr. Ian Byatt, has had considerable difficulty in identifying precisely where his responsibilities begin and end. For example, on 19 June last year, he was reported as saying:

"companies do not need . . . big dividend increases because stock market expectations for all companies' dividends have been reduced."

[Mr. Paul Tyler]

He went on to warn that the K factor of the companies could be made more onerous if they paid excessively high dividends to their shareholders instead of ploughing money back into their businesses. He also argued that:

"where new obligations are imposed on the companies in the first five years, the cost of the additional borrowing could be accommodated without an equivalent increase in revenue."

The frustration that the director general obviously felt at the limitation on his powers and role was already evident then. As if that were not enough, complex additional problems resulted from the new roles that the water companies felt that they could undertake through diversification.

For example, Welsh Water owns five country house hotels and a civil engineering business, and boasts an almost 15 per cent. stake in South Wales Electricity worth £51 million. South West Water has a property business, a civil engineering arm and a multi-million-pound 20 per cent. holding in West Country Television. The company also runs gift shops. Southern Water and Northumbria Water run car-leasing firms. Northumbria also has a personnel management company. Yorkshire Water has a direct mailing organisation.

When those diversification activities become apparent the director general issued a general warning about the extent to which they could divert the attention of the management away from their core business. My Liberal Democrat colleagues in the House and in another place sought to stop up that loophole. Eventually the Government introduced their own amendment, but it is far from clear that the role of either OFWAT or the Government has been strengthened or that diversification will be prevented, or at least limited, to ensure that it is in the public interest. It is clear from every statement made by OFWAT that there is frustration at the director general's lack of powers in respect of diversification.

Thirdly, I wish to deal with the specific case of South West Water. Obviously, in my constituency of North Cornwall, it is anorganisation that we know well, although I cannot say that we love it. It has a tarnished record of secrecy, complacency and expensive empire building, but it is not to that record that I wish to draw the attention of the House tonight.

I wish to demonstrate that what has happened to water charges in the south-west exemplifies the deficiencies of the legislation passed by the House. I should say in passing that I welcome the repentance of sinners on the Conservative Benches who voted for that legislation but have now seen its deficiencies.

South West Water is the only privatised company to have sought and be granted a major increase in its K factor for 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95. In the first year, it will amount to 16p in the pound. Obviously, in the following years it will depend on the rate of inflation. South West Water is one of only two companies which did not voluntarily defer the K element in 1991-92.

However, the south-west also has huge problems. It has a long stretch of coastline, which is a major national, if not international, asset. That has attendant alarming problems of coastal erosion and pollution. But the area has the extra problem of a demanding burden from our annual holiday invasion. It is also an area of low average household incomes. Yet it is now likely to have the highest average household charges of all 10 water companies—it is already No. 3 in the league. There is therefore now a major affordability gap between what is expected of the water charge payers of the south-west and what they can afford.

We should note, as there have been additional reports on this in the last few weeks, that the south-west has above-average wastage—up to one third of the supply from our reservoirs is lost through leakage.

To cap it all, last week the company announced record profits, record dividends and—less obviously and less ostentatiously—record executive bonuses.

All those issues are regularly drawn to the attention of my hon. Friends the Members for Devon, North (Mr. Harvey) and for Truro (Mr. Taylor), who are here tonight.

Against that background, the Director General of Water Services had to assess the bid for South West Water for an increased K factor. The announcement was made just before Christmas, during the recess, and received remarkably little publicity. The factor was 6·5 per cent. in the previous year and was increased to 11·5 per cent. for 1992-93.

Many water charge payers in the south-west expected that, when the additional funding was available to the company, South West Water would immediately announce additions to its programme, the acceleration of existing elements in it and the upgrading of schemes in the programme, to show what we would get for the money. We got no Christmas present. Hon. Members will recall that occasionally politicians are accused of producing menus without prices. South West Water produces prices without a menu. All it did was produce a press release in January which said:

"The additional 5 per cent. is largely"—

I emphasise "largely"—

"needed to fund new obligations imposed since 1989".

It continued by referring to those obligations as:

"—bringing forward the existing programme of schemes largely by 1995

—providing land-based sewage treatment for those schemes

—ending the disposal of sludge to sea by 1998".

We have not received any specific programme of change as a result of the additional funding.

OFWAT has again seemed to be impotent in the face of those unexpected profit levels, and has not been able to show what we are getting for our money. The Director General of Water Services is clearly frustrated at the extent to which the advice that he gives to the companies is ignored. I shall quote from a letter to me from OFWAT, which refers to the 1991-92 increase in charges as follows:

"You will see that Mr. Byatt's view is that profits should be viewed in the medium term rather than on an annual basis. He has, however, drawn the company's attention to the importance of customers receiving some of the benefits of the recently announced profits. He has suggested this might be by way of increased capital investment in their new environmental obligations or by not taking up the whole of their charging limit in 1991-92."

That letter was in direct response to a request for information about his attitude to the increase in charges by South West Water, but it would clearly apply equally well to other companies privatised by the Water Act 1989.

I have several crucial questions for the Minister. First and foremost, are the Secretary of State and his colleagues satisfied with his and OFWAT's powers in respect of water charges? Secondly, is he satisfied that the customer is adequately protected from excessive water charges by the powers?

Thirdly, what can the Minister do, post-privatisation, to reintroduce national Exchequer support, by way of a green dowry or by any other means, to ensure equalisation between the richer and less well-off parts of the country and to ensure adequate investment in national assets such as the south-west coastline?

Fourthly, we urgently need to know—I know that this view is shared throughout the House—whether the company's privatised status precludes the allocation of European Commission's rural development fund grants. My information is that it does, but the matter needs to be cleared up once and for all. We do not want any more false promises.

Fifthly, is the Minister satisfied that OFWAT's powers are sufficient to prevent the distracting diversification, to which I have referred, and which causes concern in all parts of the House? The Director General of OFWAT clearly expressed great concern, and we should now know whether Ministers are equally concerned.

Sixthly, what can the Minister or OFWAT do to stop companies adding insult to injury as they have in the past few days? Last week, with Cornwall and Devon in a severe depression and many people facing extortionate water bills, *The Western Morning News* reported:

"South West Water chairman Keith Court is set to collect a company shares bonus worth £137,000 on top of his £89,000 a year salary—while customers receive bills set to rise by at least a third over the next three years."

My hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) will seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to refer to an equally damaging situation that has arisen in the north-west. In a sane world, chairmen would be given a bonus for reducing water charges by record amounts, not for increasing them.

Finally, how can the Minister and OFWAT tame what even the chairman of South West Water has admitted, in a letter to my predecessor, is a "monopoly organisation"? Those are crucial questions and many people throughout the country, not just in the south-west, are waiting for positive answers from the Minister.

9.57 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I and all hon. Members from the south-west are grateful to the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) for raising this important issue. As the hon. Gentleman said, it is of particular relevance and importance to consumers in the South West Water area, because they are paying—and will be paying for years to come—much higher increases in their water charges than consumers in other parts of the country.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall has highlighted the reasons for that—the principal one being that we have such a long coastline. We have also suffered years of neglect on an enormous scale, particularly with regard to sewerage facilities. Around the whole coastline of Devon and Cornwall, one finds beach after beach where sewage is poured out on to the beach or into the sea a few miles away. That is an intolerable situation. We recognise that, and we have all been campaigning to correct it. We also have to face the consequences of that. However, the hon. Member for North Cornwall did not pay particular attention to that aspect of the matter or to the fact that massive bills to clear up the neglect and the awful position on the coastline will have to be met. The question is how those bills are to be met.

I agree with the hon. Member's implication and assertion that far too great a burden is being placed on consumers and those who have to pay the charges of South West Water. As the hon. Gentleman said, the Director General of Water Services authorised an average increase of 16 per cent. on charges this year. That average is based on a basket of five separate tariffs, at the highest level of which some people are being called on to pay an increase of 27 per cent. in their water charges this year.

I admit frankly—I have said it frequently in my constituency—that that is an unacceptable burden, particularly for consumers living on small incomes or retirement pensions. It hits particularly hard those living on amounts which take them just above any measure of income support, so that they do not receive help with any aspect of daily living, such as meeting the community charge or housing costs.

It being Ten o'clock, the Motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Non-Domestic Rating Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Mr. Harris: Since I have spoken out on this, I have received many letters, including letters from constituents of other hon. Members in the south-west. Other hon. Members will have received similar correspondence. In my constituency, this issue was raised more frequently than any other during the general election campaign. Having talked to hon. Members on both sides of the House, I have found that they too found it a frequently raised subject.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): The graph since 1974 shows that the capital invested in South West Water by Labour and Conservative Governments has been inadequate to cope with the later clean water and pollution of the sea directives of the EC. It has been pointed out that the south-west has one of the longest and most complicated coastlines in the country. The consumer is now expected to pick up the shortfall which successive Governments have caused and which was left with South West Water when it was privatised. The question is whether the consumer now has to pick up the tab for the shortfall or whether the Government will accept that the burden is too great and that something special must be done.

Mr. Harris: My hon. Friend is right, and I was about to come to that.

How is the burden to be met, as between the consumer on the one hand and any other source of help on the other? The Government, through privatisation, have made a considerable sum available to South West Water, as they have to every other water company, through the so-called green dowry.

In the light of the extra requirements that have been placed on South West Water, to which my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) and the hon. Member for North Cornwall referred, it is clear that new factors have entered into the equation since the legislation was passed. I am therefore not a sinner who repents, because we are dealing with new factors. We must recognise those and the burden that the new European factors have placed on South West Water and its customers.

[Mr. Harris]

There are two ways out of the problem. First, if the Government recognise the special case being made for South West Water by hon. Members in all parts of the House—there is nothing between us politically on this—they must accept that South West Water is in a peculiar situation. That is borne out by the decision of the Director General of Water Services, who has authorised an extraordinary increase in charges for South West Water.

Mr. Steen: And not just for this year.

Mr. Harris: My hon. Friend is right. It represents a continuing set of increases. The Government should provide extra help. Hon. Members who represent Devon constituencies have already seen the Secretary of State for the Environment. I put in a request, on behalf of Cornish Members, to see him to follow up the excellent case made by Devon Conservative Members of Parliament.

South West Water should be applying to another source of funds—the European Community—under the European regional development fund, or the structural fund as it is now called. When I was the Member of the European Parliament representing Cornwall and Plymouth, we received considerable assistance from what was in those days the European investment bank.

I consulted my successor as Member of the European Parliament for Cornwall and Plymouth, Mr. Christopher Beazley. He assured me that South West Water has had grants from the European development fund and that there is no bar to the continuation of those funds even though it is now a privatised company. In my day as the European Member of Parliament, the criterion was always that grants should go to a public authority or an organisation carrying out the services of a public authority, and I am told that that has not changed fundamentally. By one means or another, or by a combination of both, the burden on the hard-pressed customers of the South West water authority should be lifted and eased.

My hon. Friend the Minister had the great good sense to spend part of last week walking across part of my constituency, from the south to the north coast. I wish that I had known in advance, because I could have arranged for many people to meet him on the way, brandishing their water bills. I am sure that that would have had a much greater effect than this debate. I am sure that it would have made his holiday as he walked from Hayle to Marazion. Perhaps that was a missed opportunity.

I am sure that my hon. Friend has listened to the debate, however, and I can assure him that this issue will not go away. Members of Parliament from Devon and Cornwall—the South West Water area—will continue to press the issue with vigour. We are determined about this because it is a serious matter and we owe it to our constituents to get some justice in the amounts that they are being called on to pay.

10.7 pm

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), but everything he said about South West Water is also true of North West Water. I understand that OFWAT is monitoring the situation, but does it realise that the profits of North West Water are up by 7·3 per cent.? What is it doing to ensure that bills go down as profits go up? It is doing very little, and I should like it to have a few more teeth.

I should like to draw attention to the salary increase of the chairman of North West Water. Dennis Grove is on a salary of £144,000. The value of his share option is £260,000. That salary has risen by 206 per cent. since privatisation, while water charges have risen by 29 per cent. OFWAT should go beyond monitoring and take action to ensure that the bills for ordinary householders decrease. As has been said, people are struggling to pay those bills, and it is about time that the chairmen waived their salary increases and ensured that consumers had bills that they could afford to pay.

10.8 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): This is an important and significant debate, because of the concerns of people about the various regional water authorities. I am grateful to the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) for raising the subject in an Adjournment debate. Many hon. Members who have had communications with OFWAT are concerned about what is happening in their areas. The replies that we recieve are negative. OFWAT appears to be helpless and refers Members to the regional water companies, which in my case is the Yorkshire water authority. In my area, real problems are developing because of Yorkshire water authority's attitude to many aspects, particularly charges.

In the year 1990-91, bills increased by 13 per cent., and that at a time when inflation was falling. Throughout the year, the average rate of inflation was about 5 per cent. There was a massive increase in charges, over and above the K factor which was set out in the legislation and which should have been monitored by OFWAT. When I took the matter up with the director general, I was advised that the increase was a matter for the Yorkshire water authority. We need some explanation of the various roles of the water companies and the extent of their monopoly powers.

During a four-year period, standing charges in my constituency have increased by between 400 and 500 per cent., with the result that unit costs can be very expensive for those using only minimum amounts of water. That increase in standing charges is another matter that should be addressed.

My constituency held one of the compulsory trials for water metering which gave rise to tremendous problems. We are now advised by the Yorkshire water authority that, when the three-year period set by legislation for the 12 trial areas expires, the charging method will revert to the regional system. Those involved in that trial had no choice about whether to take part in the trial. Since it was compulsory, people should have the option of continuing on that scheme or reverting to the original charging system based on rateable value. If they do not, the water companies have been given more powers than the House wished them to have when the trial periods were introduced. Again we come back to OFWAT's authority and what influence the Minister has in the event of legislation being abused. That problem should be addressed by the Minister.

We are also finding that water authorities are not only interested in providing pure water and sewage discharge services but investing in other sectors, which is an abuse of privilege. Water charges are being increased at rates higher

than inflation—nearly three times higher in Yorkshire in 1990-91—yet the money raised is not invested in the industry.

Water wastage is another matter that ought to be addressed. When we challenge the water companies on why they do not take action to save the 25 per cent. or 30 per cent. of water that is wasted in the system, we are told that it would be uneconomic to locate the wastage points and to repair them—that it is cheaper to let the water run to waste. That is totally foolish and out of compliance with value for money. That is another aspect over which OFWAT has no influence, so I hope that the Minister will take action to prevent water waste and to stop money being wasted by water companies.

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): The average household —not person—in the south-west pays 62p per day for its water. That is precisely the daily cost of a copy of *The Western Morning News* and a pint of milk, so 62p a day seems to me to be good value to a household.

South West Water has achieved 99·6 per cent. compliance with bacteriological standards; dealing with foul water and sewage; and providing for investment to continue to enhance water standards and to ensure an adequate supply. Customers and visitors to the south-west have benefited from investment of £60 million in the water supply network since privatisation, which has meant no water restrictions in the south-west since 1990—despite record levels of customer demand.

Mr. Tyler: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: Yes, I will—but the hon. Gentleman asked a number of questions, and a lot of time has been taken up by other hon. Members. The hon. Gentleman has a choice. I will give way, but I may not have time to answer all the questions that he put to me.

Mr. Tyler: A number of households in north Cornwall had hosepipe restrictions imposed last summer. Is the Minister saying that there were no restrictions on water supplies last summer?

Mr. Baldry: I am saying that there have been no restrictions in the south-west since 1990, despite record levels of customer demand.

Understandably, people want the purest possible drinking water, and an assurance that their foul water and sewage is dealt with in a way that is as environmentally sound as possible. In an area such as the south-west, where a substantial proportion of people are involved in tourism, people want the cleanest possible beaches, with bathing waters reaching the highest possible standards.

My hon. Friends the Members for South Hams (Mr. Steen) and for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) made it clear that ever improving environmental standards mean continuous investment in the water industry. One reason that the industry is having to undertake so much investment now is to rectify the neglect of many decades, caused by relatively low priority in the public sector.

That was most notable during the time when the party of the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) colluded in the now infamous Lib-Lab pact—when, in 1976, the Lib-Lab Government of the day stopped all further investment in the water industry overnight.

The water industry must also satisfy the many new environmental standards that are rightly being demanded by the House and the European Community. To meet those demands, the industry as a whole has a programme of investment in excess of £28 billion between now and the turn of the century. That is £1,000 of new investment each and every minute of each and every working day.

In the south-west, that means massive investment. Capital investment by South West Water has more than trebled, rising from £49 million in 1988-89 to £172 million in 1991-92, and it is set to rise again this year. A total of 115 improvement schemes, involving treatment works, mains and sewers, were completed last year, bringing benefits to customers, visitors to the region and the local environment. Six hundred further schemes are under way across the region this year.

Coastal sewage treatment is being put into place for the first time. South West Water's "Clean Sweep" programme is one of the largest programmes introduced by any water company in Europe, and is set to clean up 81 beaches and bathing waters, thereby helping to ensure compliance with the EC designated bathing waters directive. The hon. Member for Cornwall, North seemed unclear what South West Water was investing in. I am sure that the company would be more than happy to take him through the many investments and improvements that it is undertaking, item by item.

Mr. Steen: The Minister mentioned the amount paid by each household in the south-west for its water. Are people in other parts of the country paying other water companies less or more?

Mr. Baldry: In other parts of the country, householders are paying what is deemed appropriate for improvements in those parts of the country. Different areas have different requirements, and that is reflected in water charges.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: No, I will not give way again. I have been asked a number of questions, and time is short.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) has contributed to the debate, and I think that it would be courteous to respond to her contribution. She complained about the increase in charges in the north-west. North West Water's total proposed investment, however, is £5 billion up to the year 2000: that is £2 million a day, or £20 per second every working day, and it will be invested to enhance water quality.

The water industry is now free to use the private-sector money markets, and can raise the necessary finance to implement the improvements that are demanded by both customers and environmentalists. Moreover, it can make those improvements within the timetable that has been set, confounding the sceptics. Yes, the water companies have made profits: without profits they could not attract the finance that is necessary to fund their investment programmes. Those profits, however, have not been excessive; nor have customers been required to meet too large a proportion of the cost.

Indeed, commenting on last year's results, the *Guardian* business page described them as

"relatively modest profit and dividend figures".

[Mr. Baldry]

The Independent said that the division between one third of the profit, which went to shareholders, and the remaining two thirds, which was ploughed back into the business, was

"a split which it is difficult to criticise".

Those reports display rather more financial realism than some Opposition Members.

South West's results for the latest year indicate that, although pre-tax profits have increased by 2 per cent., the level of the company's investment has risen by 45 per cent. Without commensurate returns for investors, the industry would find itself unable to attract the finance that it needs. Charges are having to rise to meet increased investment.

We recognised that after privatisation a strong framework of public regulation would be necessary, and it is for precisely that reason that the Director General of Water Services was appointed. He is an independent regulator, whose primary duty is to ensure that the appointed companies carry out the full functions of water and sewerage undertakers, and that sufficient finance is available for them to do so. He is also responsible for the protection of the interests of customers, and has a duty to facilitate competition and promote economy and efficiency.

The director is independent and must be free to undertake his statutory duties and to ensure that the companies can supply the water and sewerage services that are demanded of them as appointed undertakers. His duties to protect the interests of customers require him to ensure that in the setting of charges the companies properly reflect the demands upon them, but he must also ensure that customers are not being required to pay more than is needed to finance functions. In his capacity to promote efficiency and economy, the director will set the companies clear and demanding efficiency targets to ensure that customers benefit from the improvements that the companies are able to achieve. In setting those clear and demanding efficiency targets, one of the issues to which he will wish to pay regard is what the companies are doing about such matters as leakage.

The hon. Member for North Cornwall highlighted the provisions in the Water Industry Act 1991 under which the Secretary of State may give directions to the director. He considers that this should be used to direct the regulator in the matter of individual charges for companies. Ministers are in regular contact with the director about the whole range of matters affecting the water industry. Under this provision, the Secretary of State may give directions to the director, indicating the considerations that he should keep in mind in the exercise of his role. However, the final responsibility for setting and reviewing the limits on charges rests with the director. The Secretary of State has no power to give the director a direction which might require him to set any specific level of charge, or to impose on a company any condition which might put at risk its ability to provide the services for which it is the appointed undertaker; nor has he any plans to seek such a power.

If the Secretary of State were to seek to impose restrictions on the freedom of the regulator to take an objective view on any matter, he would call into question the independence of the regulator and prejudice his relationship with customers, the other environmental regulators and the companies themselves.

In approving the increase in water charges for South West Water, the regulator had to consider the requirements on the company to meet tighter environmental standards under the bathing waters directive and the requirements which followed the decision to treat coastal discharges and phase out the dumping of sewage sludge at sea by the end of 1998. These objectives were welcomed by customers and environmentalists alike.

The director general had first to satisfy himself that the company could not, without an increase, fulfil its functions as a water and sewerage undertaker. He then had to determine how much extra was necessary to allow the company to continue until 1995, when he proposes to review the K factors for all the companies. The director concluded:

"I have a statutory duty to ensure that the company can finance its functions as well as a duty to protect customers. I have considered carefully the figures submitted by South West Water and believe that these increases are justified. These price increases will enable South West Water to manage its programme in the period up to 1994 when I will review the price limits for all the water companies."

That was the judgment of an independent regulator, having regard to all the information that he had for South West Water.

Mr. Tyler: Will the Minister give an explicit answer to the questions about the green dowry that both I and the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) raised earlier, and to the question about European funds? If those were there, the whole equation that the Director General of Water Services would be considering would be quite different.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that, as my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives made clear, the water industry, including South West Water, has already had, as part of the proceeds of privatisation, a substantial green dowry. Privatisation made available to the water companies the sums of money that were never available when it was a publicly regulated institution that had to depend year after year on Treasury grant.

South West Water has submitted applications for European regional development fund grants. Projects have to be additional to existing plans to qualify. I understand that consideration is being given by the European Commission to the possibility of a further grant, but that in no way detracts from the conclusion to which the director general has come—that the increases submitted by South West Water are justified.

Environmental standards are being set in many instances in European Community directives, and in some instances they may require us, in order to meet the timetables set, to undertake works at a faster rate than planned. What is certainly true is that all those living in and visiting the south-west, an area that depends heavily on tourism, will want to ensure that water quality in the south-west and elsewhere in Britain is of the highest possible standard. Ensuring such high standards involves investment and——

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 3 June 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 2) BILL

Lords amendments agreed to.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Peru

1. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made to the Government of Peru in relation to the coup in that country; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): The recent events in Peru are a substantial setback to democracy in that country. In company with our Community partners, we have expressed deep concern at the suspension of constitutional rule and reports of human rights violations. We urge the early re-establishment of democratic institutions and respect for human rights within the framework of the rule of law. The Peruvian chargé d'affaires was left in no doubt of our position when he called on me at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 22 May.

Dr. Howells: If the principle of delivering non-humanitarian aid to Governments who are prepared to move towards liberty and democracy is to mean anything, will the Minister ensure that the Peruvian President is made aware of the fact that the people of this country consider that the days of South America being ruled by dictators are long gone? Will he further ensure that our partners in Europe understand our policy on that matter and that we deliver no aid to that country, other than the most vital humanitarian aid, until we have proof that democracy has been re-established?

Mr. Garel-Jones: We discussed those matters at length last week in Santiago, Chile, with our Community partners and with members of the Organisation of Amercian States. We are working with them to try to bring about a return to democracy in Peru as soon as possible. As the hon. Gentleman says, we must take other action to reinforce that position and we have already suspended balance of payments assistance promised to President Fujimori during his visit to this country earlier this year. We have also suspended consideration of the write-off of certain Peruvian debts owed to the Government, as well as action on aid proposals. We shall, of course, continue with existing humanitarian aid programmes.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the Minister tell the House what representations have been made by members of the joint Houses of Parliament of Peru to the British ambassador, and what action he intends to take about them?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I cannot answer the specific question, but the hon. Gentleman will wish to know that we are aware that there is substantial support for President Fujimori inside Peru and that our efforts and those of our Community partners are directed towards seeking to help him to return to democracy as soon as possible. I understand that on Monday of this week he made a statement that elections for a constituent assembly would be held on 18 October. That seems to us a hopeful step towards a return to democratic rule in Peru.

Mr. Foulkes: Although we welcome what the Government have already done, and the Minister's statement today, the Minister will have read the Amnesty International report published yesterday, which shows that the human rights situation is much worse than we feared. Members of APRA—the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana—in particular, are under threat and there is no indpendent judiciary. It is, therefore, necessary to convey to Mr. Fujimori—and I hope that the Government will take strong action to do so—that unless there is not only a return to democracy but an end to human rights violations, the Government, through the EC and the United Nations, are prepared to take much firmer action.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I take the hon. Gentleman's point and he can rest assured that any action that we take, with our Community partners and in co-operation with the Organisation of American States, will aim to assist Peru to rectify the mistake that we believe has been made.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Although my right hon. Friend is correct in stressing our support for the spread of democracy in Latin America and in disapproving of the action of the President of Peru in overturning the power of his congress, will he please bear it in mind that the President has to cope with a terrorist movement—Sendero Luminoso—which in many ways is worse than the IRA? It does not have popular support in Peru and it did not have the courage to test its popular mandate in either the recent presidential elections or the elections for the congress.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend's point is well made. That is why we have to balance our reaction to these events with the knowledge that there is substantial support for President Fujimori in Peru. Much of that support derives from the fact that the Peruvian people have suffered for more than a decade now from one of the most violent terrorist organisations on the face of the earth.

Yugoslavia

2. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his European Community counterparts on the situation in the former state of Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The Yugoslav crisis has been discussed at every recent meeting of European Community Foreign Ministers. I made a statement to the House about it yesterday.

Mrs. Ewing: May I first apologise to the Secretary of State for having been unable to attend yesterday because of a constituency engagement?

Is the Secretary of State now discussing specifically with his counterparts the possibility of the implementation of a naval blockade and air cargo inspection to ensure that sanctions are effective in resolving the problems, especially in Serbia? Has he had any specific discussions with representatives of Greece—*[Interruption.]*—one of the European Community partners, given that Greece may suffer as a result of the sanctions?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady was not very courteously treated by the hon. Members in front of her, so I did not hear the last part of her question. On the first point——

Mr. Skinner: It is all about Denmark.

Madam Speaker: Order. Let us proceed in good order today.

Mr. Hurd: I answered questions on the hon. Lady's first point yesterday. I am not sure that a naval blockade or an inspection of air cargoes would add very much at present to the efficacy of the sanctions. A monitoring committee of the Security Council in New York will keep an eye on the matter. We are in very close touch with the Greeks, not only on the question of Macedonia, on which they have especially strong views, but on the whole question. They are bound, and accept that they are bound, not only by the European Community decisions, but by the mandatory decision of the Security Council.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Does my right hon. Friend think that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) does not see the parallel between Yugoslavia and Great Britain, in which all attempts at ethnic fragmentation, when 80 per cent. of Scots live in England and half those who live in Scotland are not Scots, are fallacious and wrong? The Government did well to protect the Union.

Mr. Hurd: I admire my hon. and learned Friend's ingenuity. I cannot say what was in the mind of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). My hon. and learned Friend compels attention across the world as a flower of Scottish democracy.

Hong Kong Governor

3. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the future role of the new Governor of Hong Kong.

Mr. Hurd: The whole House will want to join in wishing Mr. Patten well as he prepares for this demanding job. His role and that of the Government will be to administer Hong Kong justly and efficiently until the transfer of sovereignty in 1997, and to do everything possible to lay secure foundations for preserving Hong Kong's way of life and economic success beyond that date, as provided for in the Joint Declaration.

Mrs. Mahon: How can Chris Patten expect or demand the respect of the Chinese Government when the British Government have failed to democratise the Government in Hong Kong? May we have an assurance that Chris Patten will not spend his expensive time collecting funds for the Tory party?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady is notably misinformed. The Government have begun the task of introducing democracy—directly elected representatives—in the Legislative Council. That is something that no previous Government have done but which we now have under way. The question is one of pace, as the hon. Lady knows: it is a question of how much further progress we make in 1995 and of how we ensure that the process continues after the transfer of power. The hon. Lady ought to know better than to ask such tendentious questions.

Mr. Renton: Like many hon. Members on both sides of the House, I welcome the choice of Chris Patten as governor. He is a friend and colleague of hon. Members on both sides of the House and I believe that he will be an outstanding governor. Further to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has just given, can he tell the House a little more about what decisions he expects to be taken regarding, for example, the future composition of the Executive Council and the number of elected members on the Legislative Council in the run-up to 1997? Obviously, those matters are of continuing and great interest to Hong Kong.

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that the new governor will want to rush to conclusions on these matters as soon as he takes over. He would be wise to want—I am sure that he will want—to consult widely after his arrival, to weigh up all the factors and then to put his advice to us. That will take time. I would not expect conclusions on the kind of matters that my right hon. Friend mentioned to emerge until the autumn at the earliest.

On the specific point concerning the 1995 LegCo elections, we have said that we shall be discussing those elections with the Chinese side with the aim of ensuring as much continuity as possible. Decisions on electoral arrangements will need to take account of such discussions; they are, I think, some way off.

Mr. Loyden: How can the Foreign Secretary in principle agree that a man rejected in democratic elections in this country should be imposed upon the people of Hong Kong?

Mr. Hurd: Because he is a first-class man, as hon. Members know. The hon. Gentleman will know of the very wide and hearty welcome that his appointment has received in Hong Kong.

Gibraltar

4. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to bring Gibraltar within the external frontier of the EEC.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We and the Spaniards are in discussion with the Portuguese, as the EC presidency, to find a way of ensuring that the external frontiers convention applies in Gibraltar.

Mr. Colvin: When I tabled the question, the kind of Common Market to which Gibraltar, as a Crown colony,

would belong was clearer than it is today. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, as a British Crown colony, Gibraltar will benefit from all the provisions of membership of the EC? Can he tell us why Gibraltar is at present expressly excluded from the air services agreements in Europe from which other member states have benefited?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Gibraltar's membership of the Community is undisputed, its having become a member by virtue of Britain's accession in 1973. As my hon. Friend will know, the attachment to the air liberalisation agreement of the implementation of the airport agreement has meant that the air liberalisation agreement has been withheld for Gibraltar. We have urged Gibraltar to implement the airport agreement: we believe it to be in its interests to do so.

Mr. David Young: Will the Minister take on board that fact that time is of the essence in discussions of this matter because the financial infrastructure and plans of Gibraltar depend on the air agreement? Can the Minister assure us that the Government will do everything possible to expedite those discussions?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Implementation of the airport agreement would substantially reinforce the efforts of the Gibraltar Government to promote Gibraltar as a financial centre. We do not believe that the airport agreement has the sovereignty implications that the Gibraltar Government believe that it has. We have urged them over a number of years to proceed to implement the airport agreement.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Portugal is an excellent friend of this country and it is close to Spain. Is there not now a unique opportunity under the Portuguese presidency to make progress on the airport issue? Will the Minister give the people of Gibraltar a clear assurance, to allay any anxieties, that their democratically elected Government will be kept fully in the picture on any tripartite discussions about the future of the Rock? Will he also tell us the current status of the reference to the European Court of Justice?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The Portuguese presidency is uniquely well placed to help the United Kingdom and Spain to resolve the issue. All parties are extremely grateful to the Portuguese presidency for its enormous work on the issue which we hope will be crowned with success. With regard to the case before the European Court of Justice, a preliminary hearing on admissibility took place on 5 May, but the European Court has yet to pronounce on it. We think that it is likely to do so in July. It would be difficult for me to comment until we know whether the European Court has ruled that it is admissible.

Kashmir

5. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he proposes to take to help bring about a solution to the conflict in Kashmir.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): We take every opportunity of impressing on the Government of India our concerns over human rights in regard to Kashmir, and the need for a political process there, and on the Government of Pakistan the need to prevent material support being given to the men of violence in Kashmir.

Mr. Battle: When does the Minister expect the Indian Government to respond positively to the proposals made last year by this Government that international independent organisations should be allowed in to investigate violations of human rights? Serious violations of human rights in Kashmir are reported daily and they affect many of the families and relatives of our constituents.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to those problems. Human rights abuses are totally unacceptable wherever they come from, whether from terrorists or, as they have undoubtedly come, from the security forces of the Indian Government—although there has been much exaggeration about that. We have emphasised to the Indian Government the need to respond to those terrorist threats by respecting human rights and the rule of law. We are encouraged by their decision to establish an independent human rights commission and I talked to the high commissioner about that only two weeks ago.

Mr. Jessel: Is it not basically an internal matter for India? What moral support can we give India in resolving that tragic and long-standing problem?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Of course, as my hon. Friend knows, we are friends of the Indian and Pakistan peoples and we wish to maintain that friendship. We are balanced on that important issue. We know that it must be resolved. It is a serious problem which has led to three wars in very recent memory and we will do anything that we can. However, any intervention on our part must be with the agreement of both sides.

Mr. Kaufman: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that his bromidic utterances this afternoon contrast markedly with the encouragement that the Foreign Secretary gave to Kashmiri voters in Luton when he was seeking to rustle up Conservative votes there—that this Government were going to try to do something specific to deal with a problem that has lasted far too long, has resulted in many deaths on both sides and serious violations of human rights and in respect of which the United Kingdom has a unique role and responsibility?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The right hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. The Government's position has not changed. We make our views absolutely clear. I am happy to follow every word that my right hon. Friend has said. May I also add that when he went to India he insisted on the need for a political process in Kashmir. That is also fundamental and we stand by that position.

Dame Jill Knight: Is it not the case that, apart from the efforts being made with the Indian Government, some pressure ought to be put on the United Nations, bearing in mind that two Security Council resolutions—the first dated April 1948 and the second dated January 1949—still guarantee that the Kashmiri people shall have a plebiscite on their future? Why can we not put pressure on the United Nations on the matter?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As my hon. Friend knows, those resolutions are about 40 years old, a lot of water has flown under the bridge since then and there were also resolutions calling for a plebiscite for the state of Jammu and Kashmir to decide whether to accede to India or to Pakistan; the question of independence was not at issue. We believe that some political process to enable the Kashmiri people to state their wishes for the future is the way forward.

South Africa

6. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the prospect for a democratic settlement in South Africa.

Mr. Hurd: In spite of the lack of final agreement at the CODESA 2 conference, some real progress has been made in the negotiations. We welcome the commitment by all parties to continue those negotiations and will continue to give full support to the process of reform. We are deeply concerned about the amount of violence. We urge all political leaders to support the peace structures which are now in place.

Mr. Hain: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the South African Government's dogmatic insistence on a 25 per cent. blocking veto for whites is totally undemocratic and that it calls into question President de Klerk's sincerity, especially since his security services are involved in political killings which are running at 12 a day? Surely the South African Government would be best advised to pursue the majority rule course which successfully accomplished the transition in Namibia and Zimbabwe.

Mr. Hurd: One would not guess from what the hon. Gentleman said how narrow the point of difference is. On the majority necessary for regional devolution in the constitution-making body, the ANC proposes the decisions being taken by 70 per cent. and the South African Government by 75 per cent. That is an important, but relatively narrow, point of difference. I very much hope that it can be bridged, but I do not think that it will be if we, or anyone from outside, start to lay down the law about it.

Sir George Gardiner: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the cause of democracy in South Africa is ill-served by those in this House who champion the negotiating position of one of the parties to the negotiations—the ANC—to the total exclusion of other, equally legitimate interests? Is it not by far the wiser course for us to leave the South Africans to settle it among themselves?

Mr. Hurd: The constitutional negotiations must be concluded between themselves. The line that we have taken on the matter under two Prime Ministers has been vindicated by events. As a result we have an ability to help, which is accepted on both sides, and we are giving help, for example, by encouraging those involved in the peacekeeping process to take advantage of policing experience in this country.

Sir David Steel: While the Government have a commendable desire to give every possible assistance, including economic assistance, to South Africa during the transition to democracy, is the Foreign Secretary aware that there is some anxiety among South Africa's neighbours in the South Africa Development Co-ordination Conference—all of which are poorer countries —that their needs might be forgotten. Can he lay those anxieties to rest?

Mr. Hurd: There is something in what the right hon. Member says. We are especially concerned because of the present drought, which is savagely affecting countries such as Zimbabwe and Zambia. The right hon. Gentleman may know—if not, we can tell him—of the extent of the help that we are giving, and encouraging others to give, in those circumstances.

Cambodia

7. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in Cambodia towards a peaceful settlement and democratic government.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alistair Goodlad): Under the leadership of the United Nations Secretary-General's representative, Yasushi Akashi, events are on course to meet the timetable of free and fair elections under United Nations auspices in April and May 1993. The United Nations transitional authority in Cambodia was established on 28 February. The repatriation of those Cambodians now in camps on the Thai-Cambodian border under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees began on 30 March and cantonment and demobilisation of the armed forces of the four Cambodian factions will start on 13 June.

Mr. Heald: Given the political complexity of the situation in south-east Asia, can my hon. Friend confirm that the Khmer Rouge and the other parties to the Cambodian settlement are all co-operating fully with the United Nations temporary agreement?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend raises an important point. We are concerned at the Khmer Rouge's unwillingness to co-operate with UNTAC and we have registered our concern with it. It is vital that all the factions work fully and unconditionally with UNTAC.

EC Presidency

8. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the Government proposes to do during its presidency of the Council of Ministers of the European Community.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister hopes to catch your eye, Madam Speaker, to make a statement later today on the implications of the Danish vote yesterday.

Apart from those implications, the Government will have two main priorities for the United Kingdom presidency—the completion of the single market and preparation for enlargement negotiations. We will also take forward, from the Lisbon summit, the future finance negotiations now under way and develop closer relations with eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Gapes: In view of the Danish people's rejection of the Maastricht treaty, which they clearly saw as more about a bankers' Europe than a people's or social Europe, what proposals will the Government bring forward to

amend the treaty to get rid of the excessively restrictive monetarist provisions such as the 3 per cent. budget deficit proviso? Will the Foreign Secretary also accept his responsibility for the fiasco caused by the British Government's ridiculous opt-outs on the social charter and on economic and monetary union?

Mr. Hurd: I think that it would add to the clarity of the afternoon if I left questions about the Danish referendum to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—if he catches your eye, Madam Speaker. Of course, the hon. Gentleman is right: the Community must work and develop for the benefit of its citizens. The completion of the single market and the practical measures needed for that are precisely in the interests not of bankers, but of citizens.

Mr. Burns: Will my right hon. Friend give the House a categorical assurance that during the British presidency and in the few weeks before that begins, the British Government will not agree to the renewal of Jacques Delors' post as president of the European Commission?

Mr. Hurd: No, Sir. Mr. Delors is a highly intelligent and dedicated public servant—*[Interruption.]*—with whose views on the future of Europe we sometimes strongly disagree. No commitment or decision has been taken by the British Government as to whether he should continue in his present office after the end of the year.

Mr. Skinner: Why does the Foreign Secretary not admit that the Tory Government's wonderfully laid-out plans at Maastricht have fallen apart? Why does he not acknowledge that the halcyon days of the Common Market are over, that political union is now off the agenda, that there will not be a single currency for all the Common Market states, that the European bank has gone out of the window and that the Common Market is crumbling? The sooner the Tory Government and those on the Labour Front Bench understand that, the better.

Mr. Hurd: I am only sorry that, by catching your eye now, Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman may have prevented himself from making those observations to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Rowe: Will my right hon. Friend consider, during the British presidency, the enormous importance of the north-south divide and the contributions that the Community and the countries of the Council of Europe, of which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will also be president, can make in alleviating the tremendous poverty in many parts of the world? That poverty is putting great pressure on the frontiers of the European Community as people seek to enter the Community to escape from the conditions at home.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is quite right. That is one reason why we hope very much that before we take over the presidency it may be possible to reach agreement in the GATT round. We are not so far apart now. It is conceivable that agreement will be reached; and, more than any measures of additional aid, success in the Uruguay round would help to solve the problems of the south to which my hon. Friend refers.

Mr. George Robertson: Is the Foreign Secretary aware that one of the most worrying aspects in Europe—and worrying to everyone in this House, including my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—is the rise of racism, xenophobia and right-wing populism which seems to derive from increasing levels of unemployment throughout the continent? Should not one of the top priorities for the British presidency therefore be tackling the growth of unemployment? Is not the fact that that is not a priority evidence that the Government who do nothing about unemployment in this country are encouraging a do-nothing policy throughout Europe?

Mr. Hurd: The best cure for unemployment is a recovery that is substantial and durable and does not fade away because panic measures have been taken too soon. The hon. Gentleman should also look at the experience of race relations in this country and deduce from that the importance of being able to keep in place effective frontier controls against illegal immigration.

Middle East

9. **Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest position in the middle east peace talks; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The fifth round of bilateral negotiations between the parties took place in Washington on 27 to 30 April. Although progress towards resolution of the difficult issues involved has inevitably been slow, substantive discussions are now under way. The momentum of the peace process has been maintained in the five multilateral regional working groups which have taken place in various capitals over the last three weeks.

Mr. Hicks: To help the peace process, would it not be sensible when we assume the presidency to take an initiative similar to the Venice declaration to make it clear that Israel must withdraw from the occupied territories, that the human rights of the Palestinians living there must be restored and that all United Nations resolutions on the subject should be adhered to?

Mr. Hogg: We are, of course, committed to the provisions of resolutions 242 and 338. We think that the best way of tackling the problem lies within the peace process. Certainly the United Kingdom will do her utmost during her presidency to underpin the peace process now under way.

Mr. Ernie Ross: A recent report published by the Israeli central bureau of statistics states that the number of housing starts on the west bank and in Gaza climbed to 8,110 in 1991—a fourfold increase on the previous year. Bearing in mind the international consensus on the illegal nature of those settlements can the Minister tell the House when the Government last made representations to the Israeli Government on this issue?

Mr. Hogg: We do so repeatedly. I agree with what the hon. Gentleman says: the settlements in the occupied territories are indeed unlawful and an obstacle to the peace process. We make that point repeatedly, and I do so again now.

Mr. Jopling: To what extent has the success of the talks been made more difficult by the massive flow of armaments into the middle east from former Warsaw pact

countries? And to what extent have the activities of the British Government and other Governments been successful in stemming that serious flow of armaments?

Mr. Hogg: My right hon. Friend is right. The flow of armaments into the middle east is a destabilising factor. We have tried to persuade a number of actual and prospective suppliers not to supply. We are of course heavily committed, in the process within the multilateral talks, to try to prevent the flow of arms into the middle east, but the truth is that until the peace process brings about a settlement of the essential dispute it is likely that arms will continue to enter the middle east.

Peru

10. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Peru.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Kingdom is deeply concerned at the recent suspension of constitutional government in Peru. A number of measures affecting our bilateral aid programme have recently been taken and the content of the bilateral relationship is currently under review.

Mr. McFall: President Fujimori's actions have created a democratic vacuum, with the result that the wretched people of Peru are faced on the one hand by the military, whose human rights violations are well documented, and on the other by the most ruthless terrorist group, the Sendero Luminoso, which is not content just to kill people but stuffs their dead bodies with dynamite so that they and perhaps also their neighbours are blown apart. In view of that, and in view of President Fujimori's statement that on 18 October there will be a renewal of constitutional rule, but that political parties will be excluded from the process, will the Government assure us that they will maintain the political and diplomatic isolation of Peru until the situation becomes clear and the democratic process is reconstituted?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I think that I can give the hon. Gentleman half the assurance that he wants. We are not in the business of seeking the isolation of Peru: not only with our partners in the Community but with other democratic states in Latin America, we are seeking to draw Peru back into the democratic fold. The hon. Gentleman is slightly inaccurate in saying that President Fujimori wishes to exclude political parties. I recognise that what the president said is controversial. He said that those who seek election to the constituent assembly will not subsequently be able to seek election to whatever assembly is agreed by the constituent assembly. I do not think that President Fujimori has excluded political parties from the process, as the hon. Gentleman hinted.

Cyprus

11. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a Minister from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office last visited Cyprus to discuss the situation in the island.

12. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to make an official visit to Cyprus to discuss progress towards a settlement; and if he will make a statement.

13. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made towards resolving the situation in Cyprus.

Mr. Hurd: We give full support to the United Nations Secretary-General's efforts to bring about a just and lasting settlement in Cyprus. There are grounds for some sober optimism. All sides have now endorsed the ideas set out in Security Council resolution 750, and the secretary-general has invited the leaders of the communities to New York for talks on 12 June. We have had frequent talks with Cypriot Ministers, and with all other parties to the dispute, since the last bilateral ministerial visit, which was in 1983. It has been important not to cut across the negotiations by United Nations envoys in Cyprus itself, which are again active.

Mrs. Roche: Does the Foreign Secretary not appreciate that to the Cypriot community in this country the absence of a ministerial visit indicates that the 1974 invasion by Turkey and the continuing occupation of the northern part of the island of Cyprus is not a high priority for the Government? Does he not consider that the fate of the refugees and of the missing people in that country deserves a much more vigorous Government approach?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady will be able to explain to the Cypriot community why this has happened. The last ministerial visit, by Lady Young, took place before Mr. Denktas had proclaimed that part of Cyprus as an independent state. If a Minister went in the present situation he would face the difficulty of having to choose whether to meet Mr. Denktas. Either way it would be difficult to argue that such a visit would help towards an agreement. Our main interest is to get an agreement and there is a possibility of that. I am strongly in favour of a British ministerial visit so long as we can be clear that it would help and not hinder an agreement.

Mr. Cox: Is the Foreign Secretary aware that the Government of Cyprus would welcome such a visit? As the British Government do not recognise Mr. Denktas, what is the difficulty about the Foreign Secretary going to Cyprus? He will go to Athens and Ankara to talk about Cyprus, but he will never go to Nicosia to do so. Why does he not do that?

Mr. Hurd: I have explained the reason. We had an exchange a few weeks ago and the hon. Gentleman is perfectly right to say that we recognise one Cyprus in which there are two communities and, as everyone accepts, those communities are of political equality. We keep in close touch with President Vassiliou of Cyprus and with my Cypriot colleague and shall continue to do so.

Mr. Coombs: While recognising the importance of the present UN efforts to find a solution to the Cyprus problem, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is particularly important for Britain to support continuing negotiations on the application by Cyprus to join the EC, as not to do so would not only be entirely unjustified but would give an effective veto to Turkey which occupies half of the island?

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that we should try to strengthen the relationship between the communities in Cyprus. The technical position is that we are waiting for the opinion from the Commission that the Council of Ministers requested in September 1990. We want this relationship between the communities in Cyprus to facilitate, not to make harder, the solution to the inter-communal dispute. Finding an answer to that dispute, which is possible, would unlock many doors.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is intolerable that, at a time when barriers are coming down all over Europe, a small Commonwealth island should still be divided in two? What is the Government's attitude towards the suggestion by the secretary-general that the peacekeeping force in Cyprus might be reduced, bearing in mind that Britain plays such a sterling role in that force?

Mr. Hurd: There is a strong case for reduction, and we are proceeding cautiously in that direction in concert not just with the secretary-general but with others such as the Canadian Government, who are also involved. I agree with my hon. Friend's first point. There is now a better opportunity than there has been for some months to get a solution, and we are bending all our efforts to helping the secretary-general in that direction.

Mr. Kaufman: The House will have noted that the Foreign Secretary signally, significantly and shiftily failed to answer the specific question put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche). While Ministers have scuttled off regularly to Turkey, the right hon. Gentleman himself having gone there only a few weeks ago, the right hon. Gentleman and his Cabinet colleagues will not go, and have not been, to Cyprus. This demonstrates that there is a significant tilt of the Government's policy in favour of Turkey and against the sovereign Cypriot Government. In reply to the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), who asked about membership of the Community, the right hon. Gentleman said that he hoped for speedy Turkish membership of the Community, but did not respond to the proper application of a sovereign Commonwealth country—Cyprus—to be a member of the Community. Is it not time the Government stopped being pro-Turkish and anti-Cypriot on this matter?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman seems determined to go out with a bang rather than a whimper. He was wholly inaccurate on a central point. He has never heard me advocate, firmly or otherwise, full Turkish membership of the Community. He is wrong about that. I have chosen my words carefully and they have not added up to that. I will tell you why—*[Interruption.]* I will tell the right hon. Gentleman, through you, Madam Speaker, why we have not in recent years had a ministerial visit to Cyprus. I have already explained it. We want every step that we take to contribute towards a settlement, for the reason that I gave to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche). It is clear that if we paid a ministerial visit to Cyprus, the choice—as the Canadian Minister has just found for herself—in terms of arrangements for a programme, far from helping a settlement, might set one back. For heaven's sake, let us concentrate on the central objective, which is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) said, to bring about an inter-communal settlement in this one sovereign island with two politically equal communities.

Human Rights

15. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement on the priority that Her Majesty's diplomatic service gives to the monitoring of human rights abuses overseas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All diplomatic missions overseas monitor closely, and report on, the human rights situation in the country to which they are accredited.

Mr. Michie: If it is being monitored efficiently, the Minister will know of the continuing abuse of human rights in Indonesia, where the massacre of innocent people still goes on. Despite that, the Government have a policy of selling arms to the Government of Indonesia. Is it not time that that policy was reviewed and revoked?

Mr. Hogg: We remain concerned about human rights in East Timor. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Foreign Office issued a statement on 28 January on the tragic events which took place in Dili. We shall continue to make our concern crystal clear to that Government.

Mr. Rupert Allason: Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that the diplomatic service monitors the abuse of human rights in countries that are recipients of aid from the United Kingdom and from the European Community? Will he ensure also that all future aid packages have strings attached to ensure that we no longer prop up unacceptable regimes which use weapons and aid to suppress the reasonable political rights of their countries' inhabitants?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I think that he would agree that there is a distinction to be made between humanitarian aid and programme aid. In those countries where there is gross abuse of human rights, there would be a powerful case for cutting back on programme aid. Indeed, we have done that in respect of Burma, Sudan and China.

Bangladesh

17. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the Bangladeshi high commissioner to discuss United Kingdom-Bangladesh relations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I look forward to an early meeting with the new Bangladeshi high commissioner.

Mr. Bennett: As the majority of people in Bangladesh are extremely vulnerable to any small effect of global warming, how far can the Government reassure the high commissioner that the Government will do everything that they can at the Earth summit to deal with the problems of global warming?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is not aware that the United Kingdom has indicated that it will be signing the climate change convention, which deals precisely with the matter that he has raised. Furthermore, we promised about £40 million to the United Nations global environment facility, with a

conditional offer of more money for the developing countries. We have helped Bangladesh specifically with cyclone relief by providing large sums of money—for example, £10 million last year.

Rudolf Hess

18. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to release to the Public Record Office the papers held by his Department relating to the arrival, interrogation and incarceration of Rudolf Hess between 1941 and the Nuremberg trials.

Mr. Hurd *rose——[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that the House will settle down. It is difficult for Ministers and for those hon. Members who are asking questions and it is difficult for me to hear.

Mr. Hurd: I propose to release to the Public Record Office virtually all the papers relating to the arrival, interrogation and incarceration of Rudolf Hess between 1941 and the Nuremberg trials previously withheld by my Department. The first batch of papers to be released is being transferred to the PRO this week. The remainder should be released by July.

Mr. Morgan: I welcome the main part of the Foreign Secretary's reply, but what does he mean by "virtually"? Is he aware that a promise was made to historians last autumn, long before the Prime Minister's, that the Hess file would be released to the PRO in the spring? It was not. The Prime Minister subsequently made it clear that he intended to practise more open government, but, in spite of that, the Government have become more closed. How does the Foreign Secretary intend to communicate to the historians who read the file when it is eventually released which parts he has withheld by the process of weeding? What is it that the Government have to hide?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is rather grudging in his welcome to what is a substantial move forward, although it has not come so fast as he would have wished. So far, I have agreed to the withholding of only one paper —for reasons which have nothing to do with the substance of the Hess question. There are certain records which still pose a risk to national security—*[Interruption.]* Of course there are. I have said that we are reviewing withholding. I have said that the process will not amount to a sudden avalanche. The hon. Gentleman, who takes an interest in these matters, will find as the months progress and the review continues that it is producing a substantial advance for the benefit of historians, and one far greater than has been contemplated before by any Government.

Somaliland

19. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on recognition of the countries that were formerly *(a)* French Somaliland, *(b)* Italian Somaliland and *(c)* British Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We recognise the Republic of Djibouti, formerly the French territory, and the Somali Democratic Republic, which was created by the union of the former British protectorate and the Italian-administered territory.

Mr. Bowis: Only two of the five Somali nations represented by the five stars on the Somali flag are within the republic known as Somalia. As my hon. Friend rightly pointed out, French Somaliland is now independent as Djibouti, and British Somaliland is part of Somalia. Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that the people of Somaliland hope that they, too, will return to independent status some day? Will he keep an open mind on that, as the people there and their Government move towards the conditions in which such recognition might one day become possible?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have great sympathy with my hon. Friend's concern for the people of the north, with whom we have many historic ties. Their plight is often overlooked. The Somali national movement is, however, divided and is not in control of northern Somalia—so the question that my hon. Friend poses does not arise at the moment.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister accept that the people of northern Somalia, that is the Somaliland Republic, who have strong links with this country through family ties and the service that they rendered in successive world wars, are caught in a trap? Unless they can achieve stability and good administration, they cannot win recognition from Britain or the international community, but without recognition and help they are unlikely to be able to create the administration, peace, and stability to which I am sure the Minister also aspires. Will he seek a creative way of trying to help the people in the north?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am sure that my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development would look kindly on initiatives to help the hard-pressed people in the north, along the lines that the hon. Gentleman suggests, were it possible to deliver aid to that area. The prime obstacle in the way of helping in any part of Somalia is the security situation—though we have managed to provide some help to the north in recent times.

Gulf Co-operation Council

21. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Co-operation Council; and what was discussed.

Mr. Hurd: At the third EC/GCC Foreign Ministers conference in Kuwait on 16 May, I met the Foreign Ministers of all the Gulf states except Saudi Arabia, which was represented by its Oil Minister. We discussed ways of developing closer economic co-operation between the European Community and the Gulf Co-operation Council and regional issues—especially the strengthening of the Gulf's collective security. I stressed that the security and well-being of the Gulf states remain of great importance to us.

Mr. Arnold: Was careful consideration given to any growth in the reconstruction of the Iraqi military machine, which would destabilise that region?

Mr. Hurd: Everyone at the conference was clear that we must maintain sanctions against Iraq in their full present rigour and that we must insist on Iraq's full compliance

with the Security Council resolutions—notably those which provide for the inspection and then the destruction of the weaponry of Saddam Hussein.

Abu Dhabi

22. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between Britain and Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: They are excellent.

Mr. Vaz: The Minister will know that more than 100 right hon. and hon. Members signed a personal appeal to the Sheik of Abu Dhabi asking him to increase the compensation agreement that he put forward to the creditors and depositors of the failed Bank of Credit and Commerce International. The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows also that negotiations are at a critical stage. Does he agree that now is the time for the British Government to become directly involved in securing the best possible deal for the bank's British depositors and former employees?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman has discussed that with me on a number of occasions and he will therefore know the position of Her Majesty's Government. Her Majesty's Government have no locus in the matter: it is a matter for the courts, the creditors and the liquidators; consequently, I do not think that it would be right for Her Majesty's Government to press the principal shareholders in any way to increase the contribution that is already on offer. That is a question for the others to whom I have referred.

Kashmir

23. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to raise the situation in Kashmir with the Governments of India and Pakistan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We shall continue to raise our concerns about Kashmir in our regular dialogue with the Governments of India and Pakistan.

Mr. Austin-Walker: In being—as the Minister put it earlier—a friend to both India and Pakistan, are not the Government being all things to all people? That is hardly an honourable position in the face of such violations of human rights.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I indicated in my answers to an earlier series of questions, of course we make representations about the abuse of human rights whenever appropriate. First, terrorism constitutes such an abuse and must be put down by a legitimate Government. Secondly, we make it clear that the putting down of such abuse must be done by proper means, and we have criticised the conduct of the Indian Government in the past.

Maastricht Treaty (Danish Referendum)

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the implications of the Danish referendum.

All 12 members of the European Community agreed and subsequently signed the treaty of Maastricht. The treaty amends the treaty of Rome, which can be changed only by unanimity. To come into effect, the Maastricht treaty needs to be ratified by all 12 member states. As the House knows, the Danish people voted against the treaty by a narrow majority yesterday. The Danish Government are now considering how to respond to that vote. One option is to resubmit the matter to a further referendum.

The Maastricht treaty began to build the kind of European Community that we wish to see. It introduced the concept of intergovernmental co-operation outside the treaty of Rome. It established the principle of subsidiarity rather than centralism. It established financial and other controls over the Commission.

The House has three times endorsed our policy. It did so before the final negotiation, and again after it. Following the general election, the House gave a Second Reading to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill by a large majority. The Government continue to believe that the deal that we secured at Maastricht is in the best interests of this country. In the expectation that Denmark will in due course be able to join them, our partners propose to complete the ratification procedures. We share that judgment, and intend to continue with the passage of the Bill.

It is clearly necessary, however, to consider further the legal and practical implications of the Danish referendum result before we can sensibly invite the House to proceed with the Bill's Committee stage. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will make a business statement later this afternoon to change the business for this week. We shall, of course, consult widely with our European partners.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will attend a meeting of the Twelve in Oslo tomorrow. He will report to the House on his return.

The Maastricht treaty provided mechanisms for more broadly based development of the Community, and introduced procedures to reverse the trend towards centralism. These developments create a sound basis for co-operation, and open the way for the future enlargement of the Community. We hope that that enlargement will include the countries of the European Free Trade Association, and those of eastern and central Europe. The ratification and implementation of the treaty is in our national interest, and we shall continue during our presidency to work for the Community that we secured in that negotiation.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I thank the Prime Minister for responding to my request for a statement on the conditions arising from the result of the Danish referendum. I also welcome his agreement to postpone consideration of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

May I ask the Prime Minister to make arrangements to present a thorough report to the House about the discussions and consultations on the full implications of the Danish decision before any further progress is made on the Bill? Does he not agree that such a report should be in written form rather than in the form of a ministerial statement, or a series of ministerial statements, which would not be adequate for the purpose of informing the House properly? Does he not also agree that the House should debate such a report before any further progress on the Bill is sought? Does the Prime Minister accept that such clarification is essential because it would not otherwise be possible to justify continued consideration of a Bill to ratify a treaty which the passage of events and the requirements of Community law might well render incapable of implementation?

Does the Prime Minister concur with the view that, unless and until there is an agreement in the Community that is capable of being implemented by the whole Community, it would be somewhat unreal to debate an agreement which, for the time being, has been cast into doubt by the votes of the Danish people?

Finally, does the Prime Minister agree that, whatever occurs in the immediate discussions on the Maastricht treaty, the enlargement of the European Community is still important, that the European monetary system will continue, that the democratic deficit will remain in existence, that the single market will be completed on 31 December of this year and that the social dimension is far from being adequate? In view of all that, does the Prime Minister share my view that the conditions that gave rise to the treaty persist and that the need to achieve more accountable decision making, to improve social protection and to promote the co-ordination of economic policies therefore remains?

The Prime Minister: I can agree with a great deal of what the right hon. Gentleman said about the development of the Community, both in the short and long term. I am grateful for his support for the postponement of the Committee stage until the present situation is a little clearer.

The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that we need to consider and report upon the Bill. We shall examine that. We shall be discussing the matter with our European colleagues, and I shall consider in what form a report might be laid before the House before we return to the Committee stage of the Bill. I would, though, suggest that the best way of considering the prospects for a debate would be through the usual channels. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will have heard what the right hon. Gentleman had to say about that matter.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): May I respectfully suggest to my right hon. Friend that the result of the Danish referendum merits neither triumphalism nor recrimination? However, it does place upon the British Government a responsibility to respond with the initiatives that will be at their disposal during their period as President of the European Community. May I suggest that there is increasing evidence that, in the context both of the Danish decision and of the British ambition for a wider European Community, we need further institutional reform—above all, reform that will enhance the role of intergovernmental co-operation to which my right hon. Friend referred in his statement—and, correspondingly, a

contraction of the centralising consequences of the Rome treaty and the European Single Act and of the overriding and pervasive political authority of the European Court? It is a challenge to the statesmanship of the British Government in their European character to see that those matters are addressed.

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend knows, to curb centralism and to move towards intergovernmental co-operation were two of the objectives that we set for ourselves in the Maastricht negotiations. We achieved those aims and, subsequently, we achieved the support of the House for what we did in those negotiations.

At Maastricht I believe that Britain did help to turn Europe away from the direction of centralism. There is no doubt that that is the direction in which we must continue to move as we take over the presidency of the Community later this month. If we are to exercise the presidency in a way that delivers what is best for Europe, it is vital that we act with care and deliberation. The treaty has created the basis for co-operation in Europe. It has opened the way to the enlargement of Europe which for economic, social and political reasons is, I am sure, the right way for it to progress. We shall continue to work throughout our presidency for the kind of Europe that we have set out in these debates.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I greatly welcome— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ashdown: I greatly welcome the Prime Minister's statement. This is a decisive moment for Europe.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): No wonder we call him Captain Mainwaring.

Mr. Ashdown: The Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. These are very serious matters. I hope that the House will come to order and hear what all hon. Members have to say.

Mr. Ashdown: The Prime Minister has given a clear lead to his party and has committed Britain to giving a clear lead to Europe during the presidency to ensure that Europe does not go into retreat. In both those matters, he will have the full support of this Bench.

Does the Prime Minister accept that the Danish "No" vote results from trying to create a Europe too much for politicians and bureaucrats and too little for its citizens? Does he accept that after the House confirms the Maastricht process, as I hope it will, the British people are entitled to have their say in a referendum and that the cause of Europe has nothing to fear from that process?

The Prime Minister: We are entirely concerned to ensure that we create a Europe that respects the individuality of nation countries and individual citizens within the Community. It was precisely to meet those objectives that we fought so hard for the subsidiarity clauses and for those parts of the treaty that provide for greater control over the Commission by elected Members of the European Parliament. There was the British proposal to ensure that there is a European ombudsman to deal with those problems, which also meets the points mentioned by the right hon. Gentleman. We share those objectives and we think that they are achieved in the treaty that we have produced. That is why we shall continue to fight for the provisions of the treaty.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I thank my right hon. Friend and the Government for getting the balance right and for making the obvious decision about the Committee because of the need for second thoughts, further thoughts and reconsideration of all the aspects. Can my right hon. Friend offer us the prospect of some firm statements by the Lisbon European summit at the end of June, which heralds the British presidency, so that we can have clear guidelines for the rest of the year on how the Maastricht treaty will prevail?

The Prime Minister: Upon the latter point, I prefer not to prejudge what might emerge at Lisbon. I hope that the way ahead for the Community after negotiation will be made clear by individual Governments in advance of the Lisbon summit, though no doubt these matters will be discussed there.

I inadvertently neglected to reply to the question of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) about a referendum. I am not in favour of a referendum in a parliamentary democracy, and I do not propose to put one before the British people.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Whatever else it was, the Danish referendum was a victory for democracy and a defeat for European bureaucracy and centralism. Will the Prime Minister look upon this event as a major opportunity, with Britain as President of the European Community, to attempt a substantial renegotiation of the Maastricht treaty with the objective of extending massively the area that falls under intergovernmental co-operation and reducing radically the area that comes under the supranational control of the European Community?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the provision for intergovernmental agreement is a new provision. It was obtained at British insistence and operates outside the treaty of Rome and outside the jurisdiction of the European Court. It was precisely because we wished to admit that fresh avenue of development within Europe that we fought for and obtained the provision in the agreement at Maastricht. There is always the possibility for developing that on future occasions. That is one of the fresh options for development of the Community that the Government find extremely attractive. However, I do not believe that a substantial renegotiation of the Maastricht treaty is a practical proposition at this time. We must wait and see what action the Danish Government take, but I still hope that the full provision of the Maastricht treaty will be carried forth into law.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Is not it paradoxical that some of those in the House who are opposed to the Maastricht treaty are in favour of a referendum, which is an alien idea and incompatible with our representative system of democracy? Is my right hon. Friend aware that, if some other countries had followed the example he set in negotiating so skilfully the opt-out clause, we might not now be facing the present problems? Perhaps the way ahead lies in that direction. Should not we be reassured by the fact that my right hon. Friend is about

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to assume the presidency in what undoubtedly will be an extremely difficult period? His presidency should be warmly welcomed.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. We certainly will seek to use our presidency to try to bring Europe together and to try to solve the difficult problem that lies immediately ahead of us. As for the referendum, my right hon. Friend is characteristically generous in using the word "paradoxical".

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Will the Prime Minister use his presidency to ensure that no pressure is applied to the Danish people to reverse their democratic decision? Does he realise that he has nothing whatever to fear from the widest consultation with the citizens of the four component parts of the United Kingdom on a common system of decentralisation of powers and in regard to relationships with any external institution?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly confirm that the decision in Denmark is for the Danes and I see no external pressure being put on them, but it is a matter for the Danes and for their Government to decide. As for decentralisation, the right hon. Gentleman will have heard what I had to say a few moments ago. That represents all that I have to say on that matter today.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): In the light of my right hon. Friend's insistence on decentralisation in Europe, with which we all agree in principle, how is it that there is in the common provisions in title I of the treaty an insistence that we comply as an obligation with the single institutional framework which implies centralisation together with those provisions that deal with the union, which imply that we will be citizens of a union with duties imposed on us, and as a result of which we shall be moving into a centralised Europe?

The Prime Minister: I do not agree with my hon. Friend, who, I believe, is wrong in almost every particular. I do not agree only in principle with the question of decentralisation; I agree in practice with decentralisation, and that is why among the institutional arrangements that we have produced is the intergovernmental agreement which is covered by the areas that my hon. Friend mentioned.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Prime Minister aware that the real importance of the Danish referendum is, first, that the Danes recognise that people have rights in how they should be governed and, secondly, that they have exercised those rights against the transfer of power to people who are not elected—commissioners and bankers? Far from ruining European co-operation, when history comes to be written the Danes will be seen to have opened the way for a different sort of Europe, harmonising by consent in intergovernmental co-operation that could extend over the whole of Europe a commonwealth of Europe rather than a federation.

Will the Prime Minister recognise that, if one lives in a democracy, the only common currency that matters is the common currency of popular consent for the laws under which we are governed? On that basis, the Government are right to defer the legislation because, in my opinion, the Danes have struck a blow for the people of every country in Europe, not just their own.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will know, as a distinguished Member of the House for many years, that common consent in this country is exercised through a parliamentary democracy and through the voices and words of Members of Parliament in this House. As for the sort of Europe to which the right hon. Gentleman referred—a decentralised Europe—I believe that the point that is central to the agreement secured at Maastricht is that Maastricht traced the pattern for the development of that sort of Europe. That is what lies behind the provisions for intergovernmental agreement rather than agreement only under the treaty of Rome, and that is what also lies behind a number of the other provisions, including subsidiarity. We have begun to build that sort of Europe.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the siren voices now suggesting that the timing of enlargement should be slowed because of our present reappraisal of the situation should be rejected? During his presidency, will he reassure the House that we shall move with all speed and not be delayed in any way in bringing the countries of central and eastern Europe into this alliance?

The Prime Minister: That would certainly be my intention. I believe that the more speedily we can move to enlargement, the healthier we shall find democracy across Europe and the more secure democracy will become in those eastern states that first become association members and then full members. It is, of course, a matter that will need to be agreed with all our Community partners, but the British position is quite clear: we favour enlargement, and we favour it sooner rather than later.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Looking forward to Edinburgh in December, may I ask the Prime Minister on what basis the Danes will attend? As one who, rightly or wrongly, voted for the Maastricht treaty, may I ask what the price of all this is in terms of European co-ordination on the environment, the rain forest, and the ozone layer? In terms of the environment, what do we have to pay for the Danish decision on Maastricht?

The Prime Minister: The Danes will, of course, continue as full members of the Community. They have been full members and valuable partners within the Community, and will continue to be so in the future, as they have been in the past and are at present. Co-operation on the matters that the hon. Gentleman mentioned will also continue, precisely as at present. As for the future—the new areas covered by the Maastricht treaty—that will depend on how the matter eventually falls out, and what final decisions are taken by the Danish Government.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As the Prime Minister will face a rather more difficult but also a more hopeful and more flexible opportunity as President of the Council, will he tell the House whether there is any truth in the rumour that the Government have agreed to extend Mr. Delors' period in office by two and a half years—or is it totally untrue? If it is true, what would be the implications of such an extension?

Mr. Skinner: He would get a bigger pension.

The Prime Minister: On the first part of my hon. Friend's question, on the presidency of the Community, nobody said that it would be easy at any stage, and I doubt whether it will be now. None the less, there is a great deal to be done, and we shall try to move in the direction in which we believe Europe should go over the next six months. No decision has yet been taken on the presidency of the European Commission, and any reports to the contrary are unfounded and premature.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Will the Prime Minister tell the House what the Government's objectives will be when they carry out the urgent consultations with our European partners?

The Prime Minister: First, we need to examine all the details of the precise impact of the Danish electorate's rejection of the Maastricht treaty. Some parts of the treaty do not need to be carried into domestic legislation—for example, the part on intergovernmental agreement. We first need to examine precisely what does and does not require to be taken into domestic legislation. We shall then wish to discuss with our partners in Europe precisely what mechanisms exist to carry the treaty fully into operation, and to discuss with the Danes how they now see the future. Clearly, that is the first matter, and a great deal of consultation will be necessary.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Would the Prime Minister care to put on the record today the fact that in doing as it did the Danish nation was exercising its democratic right, and that the Danes deserve to be accepted for what they did in a democracy? Does he also welcome the fact that the people of Denmark have surfaced in defence of what they believe, and that their vote was a vote against Maastricht and has to be accepted as such?

The Prime Minister has confirmed at the Dispatch Box today that he is against centralism in Europe. Does he not believe that, as France is to have a referendum—far be it from me to advocate following France—the people of this country should have the same opportunity for a referendum? Having imposed on the people of Northern Ireland the so-called alien system of referendum, why will he not impose it on the rest of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I am pleased to follow such a prominent francophile as the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). The Danes were operating within their constitution, with its provision for a referendum. Provision for a referendum has long been in the French constitution, too. If I recall accurately, one of the provisions of the French constitution is that if a matter is put to the people in a referendum the result can override the will of the French Parliament. That is not a constitutional arrangement that we have ever accepted in this country, nor do I believe that it would be generally acceptable to the House of Commons, or in the interests of good government in this country.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): The Prime Minister was generous in responding to the Leader of the Opposition by offering a debate and, perhaps, a report. Will he now be as generous to the leaders of the national parties in Wales and in Scotland and invite them to talks as they supported the principle of the Maastricht treaty? We now have an opportunity to discuss the Prime Minister's interpretation of subsidiarity and to consider the way in which membership of the Committee of the Regions should be organised.

The Prime Minister: Matters such as the hon. Gentleman mentioned are best aired on the Floor of the House in the time made available by the House. I told the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition that I would make available to the House the way forward as we saw it and what we saw as the implications of what has happened in the past few days. I also said that it was for the usual channels to consider whether there should be a debate. Personally, I am sympathetic to the request.

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Is my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister aware that he is absolutely right to affirm as he has done his determination to support the Maastricht treaty which he and the Foreign Secretary were responsible for negotiating? The House gave it a majority of 244—an overwhelming majority—and rejected the hostile views which have been put forward again this afternoon. That is a sufficient basis for my right hon. Friend to continue his work.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the suggestion, as I understood it, by the Leader of the Opposition that we should go no further in Committee until we see where other countries are going is really not tenable? [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because if every country did that, nobody would see where anybody had got to. The basic point is for us to press ahead.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is also right in saying that this is a matter primarily for the Danish Government and the Danish people? Will he also recall that, in the history of the Community, we have had difficulties at times? One example is when President de Gaulle left the chair empty for several months and withdrew French participation in the Community. The French now, of course, have come back again. Will my right hon. Friend also recall that, when President de Gaulle vetoed British entry into the Community, the five discussed having a Community of six with us and rejecting France? We have had such problems before and the Community has not only survived them but overwhelmed them, and has become increasingly successful. That will continue on this occasion.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for what he said. I see our role in the presidency as helping Denmark and not as condemning it in dealing with the difficulties that lie ahead. In my experience in the Community, one generally finds that all things are possible in due course.

My right hon. Friend mentioned the position of other countries. A number of other countries have made it clear that they intend to go ahead with ratification without, as far as can be seen from their preliminary statements, any delay. I agree with my right hon. Friend. My right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Foreign Secretary and I believed that this was the right treaty when we negotiated it. The treaty itself has not changed, nor has my view of the treaty.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The Prime Minister is clearly proud of the intergovernmental and subsidiarity provisions of the Maastricht treaty. Will he use the opportunity of the presidency to extend those excellent provisions to the very heart of the treaty—economic and

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monetary union—so that we can reduce the power of the bank, of the Commission and of the court over economic and monetary matters?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, that is not a presidency matter as such, but a matter that would need to be dealt with in an intergovernmental conference. None is planned; such conferences tend to be planned some time in advance. The right hon. Gentleman will also know that, because of our concern that the House could take a decision on those matters at an appropriate time, and in the economic circumstances that were clear at that time, we secured a provision to opt into that arrangement at a later date, if the House of Commons felt it right to do so.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Would my right hon. Friend suggest to Monsieur Napoleon Delors —who today, rather than showing humility, seems to be showing his customary arrogance—that, henceforth, 2 June should be a public holiday throughout Europe, to be known as the day of the people, the day of democracy or, even better, the day of the nation state?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure that I would put it in quite the way that my hon. Friend suggests to me—certainly not for this country. I cannot say what may happen in other countries, although I seem to believe that Hamlet said something like, "At least, I am sure it may be so in Denmark."

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): The Prime Minister will be aware that his statement will have done nothing to clear up the confusion that probably exists among thousands and millions of people in this country. Will he clarify the matter for me? As all 12 countries must agree to the treaty, and as one country has now agreed not to sign up to the treaty, are we not now faced with a completely new situation? What happens if France has a referendum and other countries have referendums and vote against? When do we decide that enough is enough and that we must start all over again?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady should not be too impatient. The decision in the Danish referendum was taken yesterday. We need to reflect and consult upon that and determine what decisions the Danish Government propose to make. It is in the light of that consultation and consideration that we can decide the way forward. The hon. Lady is perfectly correct, however, in saying that if, at the end of all those considerations, Denmark still cannot ratify the treaty, amendments to the treaty of Rome as such cannot be made. That is undoubtedly the case.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, owing to the agreement between all the political leaders in this country, there was no proper discussion either of the details or of the principles of Maastricht at the last general election? Does he agree that, if we are to avoid having a referendum, there must be full, adequate and proper discussion in the House of all the details of the Maastricht treaty, otherwise we shall be left with a people who do not know what has been signed up to and we shall have much the same misunderstanding as we have had about the Single European Act, which was so disgracefully guillotined?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, before my right hon. Friends and I went to Maastricht, there was a substantial debate in the House. There was a further debate on my return. It was a matter at issue at the general election and we have also had the Second Reading of the Bill. My hon. Friend expresses his enthusiasm for detailed and proper discussion. I believe that we shall be able to accommodate him when we move to the Committee stage of the Bill.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): As the Prime Minister is obviously a great supporter of parliamentary government, I am sure that he will learn from the Danish example that the Danish people were fully informed about the pros and cons of the agreement. Will he therefore consider issuing to the people of Britain, as a matter of urgency, copies of what is proposed in the Maastricht treaty so that, during the re-examination process, they may make their views known to hon. Members, who can then inform him of what the British people want?

The Prime Minister: It is not for me to comment on the motives of millions of Danes who cast their votes in the referendum yesterday. They may well have had a whole series of differing motives for casting their votes as they did. The hon. Lady suggests that we advance the details of what is in the treaty to people in this country. I believe that we have one of the most extensive parliamentary and media reporting systems of any nation in Europe. We have also spent far more time debating the matter—both before and after the agreement in Maastricht—than any other European nation.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Had my right hon. Friend noted that among those who voted no in Denmark yesterday were those urged to do so both by those who thought that the Maastricht treaty would over-centralise Europe and by those who thought that it did not go far enough? On that basis, will my right hon. Friend not draw too many conclusions but instead press ahead, as he has said he will, to ensure, before the November leaders' meeting in Edinburgh, that the basis of the Maastricht treaty is the basis of agreement within the European Community? We can then ensure that we safeguard the principles that he negotiated last year—in particular, those that restrain the existing treaty of Rome, such as the Court of Auditors and increased powers of scrutiny of the European Parliament.

The Prime Minister: I believe that my hon. Friend is right. I had noticed the point that he drew to the attention of the House and it was largely for that reason that I indicated that it was not for me to comment on individual Danish motives. Clearly, many separate motives would have been at work in the decisions that individual Danes took.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): In these days of democratic, open government, with lots of information, will the Prime Minister explain why every household in Denmark received more objective and partisan detail about the advantages and disadvantages of the treaty than was received from Her Majesty's Government by any

Member of the House? On his comments about intergovernmental co-operation, does he agree that such co-operation need not depend on a single currency or, bearing in mind the history and development of our eastern neighbours in Europe, on a single market?

The Prime Minister: A single market is attractive to increase the flow of free trade and it is in the interests of the consumer in minimising the price levels that would otherwise apply. That issue has been discussed in this Parliament and throughout the European Community, largely, it must be said, at British instigation over recent years.

On the hon. Gentleman's initial point, I believe that a great deal of documentation has already been made available. I believe that people are well aware of the substantive issues.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I have never been a critic of the Government's European policy, and I pay tribute to his achievements in modulating the Maastricht treaty? Nor do I share the extravagant fears of some of my colleagues about sovereignty. However, it must be said that the Maastricht treaty was never wanted by this Government, this House or this country. The Maastricht treaty makes the best of a bad job. There is no enthusiasm in the country, nor, I detect, even in the Government, for the treaty because the Government seem rightly more proud of their amendments than of the treaty. So well have the Government done that misgivings are developing in Germany over European monetary union and in France over the political implications of the treaty.

Therefore, I would recommend to my right hon. Friend, if I may, that he uses the presidency to promote in future, as he has promoted in the past, a dilution of the unrealistically federalistic aspects of the agreement and that he should bear in mind the motto that the Maastricht treaty was what back-burners were invented for.

The Prime Minister: If one went down the route that might inevitably follow what my hon. Friend has said and perhaps reopened an intergovernmental conference, I fear that we would go right back to the arguments about a centralist Europe that we spent so much time at Maastricht seeking to rebut. There is a great deal in the treaty that we have sought in this country for some years: the recognition of intergovernmental co-operation; subsidiarity; the reinforced rule of law; co-operation on justice and home affairs; improved foreign policy co-ordination without circumscribing this country's freedom in foreign policy; and stronger budget disciplines. All those are matters upon which the House has previously expressed a view and urged the Government to seek greater clarity in European policy to achieve it. We have achieved it in the treaty.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Given that the Prime Minister and his colleagues will never again be able to say that a small nation of approximately 5 million people cannot possibly have a major influence on the development of the European Community, will the Prime Minister seriously take on board the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones), that the democratic nationalist parties elected to this House are willing to meet the Government to discuss the principles of subsidiarity and the extension of the European Community? Given that we supported the Prime Minister in the Maastricht accord, surely he should consider that because the usual channels ignore us.

The Prime Minister: No one in the Government would ever suggest that the nation of which the hon. Lady is a representative has no influence in these isles or beyond. Indeed, it fills a large number of seats in my Cabinet at present, and will no doubt do so in future. The way for the hon. Lady and for the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) to make the points about which they are so concerned is in the series of debates and ample time that will be made available to debate those issues. Those representations can be made, and it is always open for other representations to be made direct to Ministers.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is one vital British national interest—the proper completion of the single market by the end of this year? In all his negotiations in the weeks ahead, will he bear in mind that the enforcement provisions are badly needed if that policy is to succeed and we are to be able to achieve a proper and effective single market throughout Europe?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend; he is right. Some difficult decisions still have to be taken to ensure a free and fair single market across Europe by the end of this year. That is the objective that the Community has set itself, and it is one that I hope that it will be able to achieve during the British presidency.

Mr. Dennis Canavan: (Falkirk, West): Does the Prime Minister agree that the main lesson to be learnt from Denmark is that the sovereignty of the people is far superior to the phoney sovereignty claimed by any over-centralised institution, including this place? Does he also agree that the nations of Europe, including the people of Scotland, want the maximum self-determination consistent with maximum co-operation between all the nations of Europe, on as equal a basis as possible? Why not have a referendum on that?

The Prime Minister: On the question of a referendum, I have explained to the hon. Gentleman before that we are a parliamentary democracy and I believe that it serves our interests to operate as one. The extension of co-operation is one of the great themes set out in the Maastricht treaty, and so I look forward to the hon. Gentleman's support on those matters in the Division Lobby later.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the derailment of Maastricht is not a problem; it is an opportunity? Does he further agree that British public opinion has never changed on Europe? Our people have always been in favour of a Europe-wide free trading area. They have never been in favour of the gradual and surreptitious building of a European state. Does he agree that, if we defer consideration of the Maastricht treaty for a considerable time, we shall strengthen his negotiating hand, and, with his presidency, perhaps build a Europe at ease with itself?

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend rightly says, the people of this country have consistently voted to make a success of our membership of the Community and in recent months we have repeatedly set out our vision of the development of the European Community. It is too

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early to determine precisely how events will continue. A great deal of consultation and consideration will need to take place in this country and with our partners abroad.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Why can we not have a referendum in this country? Is the Prime Minister uncertain of his position when arguing in a referendum? It is wrong to say that referendums are alien to this country. They are unusual, but not alien: we had a referendum in 1975. If it is right for other parliamentary democracies such as Denmark, France and Ireland to have a referendum, why cannot the British people have one?

The Prime Minister: On the hon. Gentleman's 1975 illustration, as I recall, the Conservative party voted against a referendum in 1975. It was introduced only to cover up divisions in the Cabinet of the day. No such divisions exist in my Cabinet.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister confirm that the no vote in Denmark is binding upon the Danish Government, and that if one country of the Community fails to ratify the Maastricht treaty before the end of this year the treaty collapses? If he is prepared to confirm those facts, will he give the House an assurance that we shall start all over again and renegotiate along the lines of the excellent suggestions made by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher)?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is partly correct on the facts, but not wholly. He is certainly correct in saying that, if one country fails to ratify the treaty, the amendments to the treaty of Rome cannot be made; they can be made only by unanimity. He is not correct in saying that ratification has to be by the end of the year. That is not necessary.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): From the various answers given by the right hon. Gentleman, may we take it that it is the Government's intention, after a period of postponent and consultation, to return to the House with the same treaty and the same Bill and to try to implement it?

The Prime Minister: We propose to negotiate with our partners and others. On the basis of that negotiation, we will bring back the treaty to the House at Committee stage, yes.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many of us who greatly admire what he has done and support his stand nevertheless feel that the biggest single impediment to achieving what he wishes to achieve is the continued presence of the present President of the Commission?

The Prime Minister: I note with interest what my hon. Friend has to say on the matter.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Prime Minister aware that all of us who believe strongly that this country has already lost enough sovereignty are very grateful to the people of Denmark for their decision yesterday? The Prime Minister constantly reiterates that there was a substantial majority in favour on Second Reading, but is he aware that that was on a whipped vote? Bearing in mind the comments of some of his hon. Friends today, is he aware that there is no basic enthusiasm for the treaty among the British people or among a large number of hon. Members, possibly a majority? Therefore, in view of what the Prime Minister says about democracy and why we should not have a referendum, the next time that the treaty comes before us, would it not be right for arrangements to be made on both sides of the House for a free vote?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman is well aware of the debates that we had on that matter prior to the general election and of the debates that we have had subsequently to it. Before I went to Maastricht, no one was in any doubt about the negotiating stance that I would take in Maastricht. It was placed before this House, it was debated in this House, and it was approved by this House. Similarly, when I returned from Maastricht, I laid the agreement before people. It was discussed, it was debated, and it was approved. It was the policy of the Government in the general election, and the British people were not whipped in the decision that they took on that occasion.

Business of the House

4.16 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement.

The business for today and for the remainder of this week will now be as follows:

TODAY—Debate on the Earth summit in Rio on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I suggested that yesterday.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. I am glad, for once, to accommodate him.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Not too often.

Mr. Newton: I accept that as well.

THURSDAY 4 JUNE—Proceedings on the Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Bill *[Lords]*, followed by proceedings on the Mauritius Republic Bill *[Lords]*.

FRIDAY 5 JUNE—The same business I proposed when I made my statement last week—a debate entitled "Tenants' Rights, Opportunities and Participation" on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

I shall, of course, be making a statement tomorrow, in the normal way, on the business for next week.

Madam Speaker: Before I call hon. Members to ask questions on the business statement, I remind the House that it is a supplementary statement and that it deals only with the business for today and tomorrow. It would be totally out of order to ask other questions; I would not accept them.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I thank the Leader of the House for the statement and welcome his announcement of a debate later today on the Earth summit. May we have an assurance that, following the Prime Minister's return from Rio, we shall have a statement in the House on what transpired during that important conference in Brazil?

May I also express my disappointment that the Leader of the House has not taken the opportunity provided by the new time available to arrange a debate on the plight of the Maxwell pensioners? I understand the Government's need to bring the two Bills that will be discussed tomorrow to the Chamber at some time, but surely this was an excellent opportunity for the Government to provide time for a debate on the plight of the Maxwell pensioners——

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is not heeding my warning——

Dr. Cunningham: But I am talking about tomorrow. I am asking the Leader of the House to think again about the business that he has announced for tomorrow, to take off the Bills that he has announced and instead hold a debate on the plight of the Maxwell pensioners. I am sure that that is in order, given the statement that has been made.

I reiterate the request made by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition to the Prime Minister—that following the discussions at the Council of Ministers and the consultations in which the Government will obviously be involved, the Prime Minister should lay on the Table of the House a written statement of the Government's conclusions; and that that statement be debated before consideration of the Maastricht treaty is undertaken.

Mr. Newton: To take those points in reverse order, the hon. Gentleman will have heard what the Prime Minister said in response to his right hon. Friend's request and his subsequent acknowledgement that, although this was a matter for further consideration, including by me, he was sympathetic to the proposal. I need hardly add that the Prime Minister's expressed sympathy for the proposal will be borne very much in mind by me.

As for the hon. Gentleman's intermediate point, I cannot add at this stage either to what I have just said in my statement or to what I said at business questions last week. The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has said on a number of occasions that he hopes before too long to make a statement on the Government's proposals on the review of the framework of occupational pensions law. That will provide some opportunity for comment along the lines that the hon. Gentleman has sought.

Lastly, I would expect there to be a statement following the Prime Minister's return from Rio.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): The first item under Orders of the Day is not to be moved, but I notice that on the motion for the Adjournment my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) will raise the matter of the future of the British banking industry within the European Community. Will my right hon. Friend explain how he will accommodate the two debates that appear to be before us today?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend is a former Chief Whip with considerable experience of these matters. I hope that I am right in saying that I expect that the Government Whip will shortly move the Adjournment of the House and the debate on Rio will take place on that motion until 10 pm—at which point the motion to allow further debate of the Maastricht Bill will not be moved and the Adjournment will again be moved so that the debate to which my right hon. Friend refers can take place.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Whatever view one takes of the issue, I am sure that the Government were right to defer debate on the Committee stage to a later date. That gives everyone a chance to take stock.

There is some prospect of the Foreign Secretary engaging in some quick negotiations with some of his counterparts in Europe, and he may be in a position to make a statement on Friday, so will the right hon. Gentleman encourage him in that and ensure that the facility to do so is provided?

Will the Leader of the House take to heart the fact that as the debate on Rio today takes the form of an Adjournment debate, so that the issue is unamendable and will not be voted on, we shall need an opportunity later for proper debate on a substantive motion which could be amended and voted on?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman's last point should be considered once we know the outcome of the Rio summit and have heard the statement that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will doubtless want to make on it.

[Mr. Newton]

One advantage of a debate taking place on a motion for the Adjournment is that it enables hon. Members to range widely; it is not excessively restrictive in terms of the negotiating position that the Government will need to adopt at Rio.

I have forgotten the hon. Gentleman's second point——

Mr. Kirkwood: The Council of Ministers.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that the Foreign Secretary will seek to inform the House of the conclusions of the meeting at Oslo at the earliest possible opportunity.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): So as to remain in order, the Leader of the House said that he would make his normal business statement on Thursday. I remind him of the Procedure Committee recommendations about the business statement. The House seemed to agree that, as far as possible, the Leader of the House should announce business for two weeks rather than one. If my right hon. Friend could move in that direction, he would become even more popular.

Mr. Newton: That sounds like a rather ingenious way round one of your earlier observations, Madam Speaker. My respect for my hon. Friend is such that even in those circumstances I am prepared at least to take note of what he has said.

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his response to the question about Maxwell pensioners? Is he aware that many thousands of Maxwell pensioners are facing severe financial and physical hardship? Is he further aware that those pensioners are getting ministerial views on the matter from the newspapers? Does he not think that it would be better for Ministers to make a statement tomorrow about the position of those pensioners?

Mr. Newton: I cannot add to what I said in response to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). Obviously the Government are aware of the concern about this matter.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I welcome the statement about a debate on Mauritius, which occupies most of my waking thoughts. I hope that during the debate we shall deal with the problems that Mauritius may have about referendums. There is a distinct resemblance between the referendum in Denmark and a Mauritius referendum and it strikes me—it is only a thought—that the Danish Government might ignore the result of the referendum or have a replay in the hope of reversing the decision. I trust that the same thing would not happen in Mauritius.

Mr. Newton: Given that the purpose of the Mauritius Republic Bill is to provide for the consequential effects of Mauritius not only being independent but being a republic, I shall not attempt to use this occasion to tell the Government of the Mauritius Republic how to conduct its affairs; nor do I intend to seek to add to what the Prime Minister said about the decision in Denmark being a matter for the Danish Government and people.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Would the Leader of the House reconsider his business statement for today and tomorrow and find time for a discussion of early-day motion 82 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell)?

[That this House condemns the Government for pursuing policies that have led to an emerging crisis in National Health Service dentistry; notes the increasing difficulties experienced in many parts of the country in obtaining registration as National Health Service dental patients because of the growing number of dentists that have been driven to withdraw National Health dental services through a deliberate policy of underpricing the new dental contract; warns that further and rapid deterioration will take place if the Government fulfils its intention of cutting dental fees further; condemns the pursuit of a backdoor policy of privatisation of dentistry through underfunding and higher patient charges; and commends the General Dental Practitioners Association for drawing this serious situation to the nation's attention.]

Many dentists in my constituency——

Madam Speaker: Order. I regret to call the hon. Gentleman to order. I know that he is a new Member, and I am trying to be helpful. That is the type of business question to put to the Leader of the House on Thursdays during normal business questions. The hon. Gentleman has had a good try. I hope that he will attempt to catch my eye on another occasion.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): In relation to the business that has been announced for tomorrow, does my right hon. Friend recall that 10 days ago, when we discussed the business for this week, the shadow Leader of the House said that he wanted a debate on Maxwell? I supported that call for a debate and said that in the previous Parliament the Opposition had not called for such a debate.

Madam Speaker: Order. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. The hon. Gentleman must come to order and ask a question about the business today or tomorrow, and he must be precise.

Mr. Shaw: I am trying to clarify the situation. When I left the Chamber at the end of business questions last time, I was unfairly and incorrectly criticised by the shadow Leader of the House. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am prepared to hear the hon. Gentleman if he has a precise question to put to the Leader of the House about the business for today or tomorrow.

Mr. Shaw: I may have to raise the matter as a point of order.

Madam Speaker: Order. I will take no points of order until we have finished questions. If the hon. Gentleman has a question to put to the Leader of the House, I am prepared to hear it.

Mr. Shaw: I would also support calls for a debate tomorrow, because this week is an appropriate week to have a debate on the plight of the Maxwell pensioners. This is getting serious. The number of Maxwell pensioners who face losing all or part of their pensions is increasing, as more information comes out week by week. We have also heard this week about the money controlled from Liechtenstein, which could be used to help these pensioners and should be brought back to the United

Kingdom. Parliament needs to address the issue. I urge the Leader of the House to change the business so that we can have a debate on the plight of the Maxwell pensioners.

Mr. Newton: Having touched on this matter twice now, I cannot add to what I said earlier except to make, as I think I did on the previous occasion that my hon. Friend raised this matter, the point that he was a member of the Select Committee and that another matter on my right hon. Friend's agenda is his reply to the Select Committee's proposals.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Given that yesterday's referendum highlighted the gap between Parliament and people in Denmark, that an even greater gap exists between the Scottish people and this Parliament, and that it will no longer be possible to raise that point in the debates in the Committee considering the Bill that would have implemented Maastricht, why does not the Leader of the House take the opportunity of the cancellation of the Bill to arrange a debate for tomorrow to deal with the demand in Scotland for a multi-option referendum? That would at least give the Prime Minister the opportunity to explain to the House and the people why he refuses to apply here at home the principle of subsidiarity which he preaches so piously across Europe.

Mr. Newton: I cannot add to the extensive remarks of my right hon. Friend on the subject just a few moments ago.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): He said nothing.

Mr. Newton: That is what I am not adding to.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): When we debate the Mauritius Republic Bill, will the Minister who answers be briefed on three specific issues? The first is the plight of those who lived in Diego Garcia and were turfed out and put in appalling circumstances in Mauritius so as to create the biggest Anglo-American base outside the continental United States. We have certain moral obligations to those people who were turned off their island and sent to Mauritius. Both the compensation that they were given and the diseases that they have incurred since arriving in Mauritius are shame-making. We have a moral responsibility, when Mauritius becomes a republic, for these Ilois people.

Secondly, will the Minister be briefed on what we are proposing to do to help Mauritius to look after its mangrove swamps, which are extremely important for fish breeding? Again, if we are serious about the outcome of Rio, we have an obligation, because we have great expertise both in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and in the Department of the Environment.

Thirdly, we need clarification of the constitutional position between Mauritius and the former British Indian Ocean territories, particularly Aldabra atoll—a point that I raised at great length in the 1960s. It has been a success story, with an outstation of the Royal Society, but, nevertheless, its position has to be clarified if there is to be a change in the constitutional position of Mauritius.

Mr. Newton: I shall not attempt to answer all the hon. Gentleman's points, but he asked me the specific question whether I would draw these matters to the attention of the Minister speaking tomorrow. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be extremely pleased to have advance warning of what is to be raised in the debate and I shall ensure that that warning is passed on. As to the second of the three points, it appears to me that fish breeding in mangrove swamps is a matter that, subject to the opinion of the occupant of the Chair, might be raised during the remainder of today's proceedings.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I welcome today's debate on the Rio summit but will there be a statement during the debate on the Government's attitude towards the assassination of street children in Brazil? Bearing in mind that the number of killings has increased in the run-up to the summit, does the Leader of the House agree that this is an urgent matter which requires the intervention of the Prime Minister during his visit to Rio and a statement during today's debate?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who will speak in the debate, is in his place and will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made a reference to the matter in response to a question during Prime Minister's Question Time on Tuesday.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): The Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Bill is an important piece of proposed legislation. It would be a matter of great regret if tomorrow we were to allow all its stages to be completed on the nod. The business statement did not make clear exactly what arrangements are being made for amendments. Will the Leader of the House set out in some detail the procedure that will be adopted for the tabling of amendments to the Bill?

Mr. Newton: That is a matter for the Chair. I am sure that those who are responsible for considering whether manuscript amendments will be accepted will have heard the hon. Gentleman's implicit representations on the matter.

I endorse the hon. Gentleman's view that the Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Bill is an important piece of legislation. It concerns especially the position of Abbeyfield societies. As president of the Brainfield Abbeyfield Society, I feel strongly about the matter.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I share some of the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). Will the Leader of the House confirm that we shall be dealing tomorrow with all stages of the Mauritius Republic Bill? If that is so, and given the extraordinary circumstances surrounding today's business statement, will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that at some stage during today's proceedings Members will have the right to table amendments to that Bill, and the other Bill that will be before us tomorrow?

Madam Speaker: I can be of assistance to the House. In the exceptional circumstances that we shall face tomorrow, I am sure that it will be for the convenience of the House if amendments are received by the Clerks at the Table before Second Reading. I know that an informal list of amendments will be placed in the Vote Office.

Dr. Godman: Is there a chance of a supplementary question, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: I call Mr. Faulds.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Will the Leader of the House accept that there will be general pleasure that there will be an opportunity tomorrow to discuss the problems of endangered species? But does the right hon. Gentleman share my view that the dodos who have been on parade this afternoon do not represent either the majority view of the House of Commons or, indeed, the British people?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure precisely who the hon. Gentleman has in mind, but I must say that I would never have dreamed of referring to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) in that way.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During the previous business questions I said that no Opposition Member had called for a Maxwell debate until those business questions, and had not done so before the general election. After I left the Chamber, the shadow Leader of the House deemed it necessary to accuse me of inaccuracy. I have since obtained from the Library a letter which confirms that I was correct and that no Opposition Member had called for a Maxwell debate in the previous Parliament. I would hope that the shadow Leader of the House would accept that I was correct on that occasion.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The hon. Gentleman made a wild and inaccurate charge about the speeches, interviews and statements that were commonplace among Opposition Members about the plight of Maxwell pensioners. He is now narrowing the issue to what happened in the Chamber. He is trying to wriggle off the hook of the third-rate smear that he aimed at the Labour party, which I reject.

Mr. Shaw *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. There can be no further points of order on that matter. I have heard the hon. Members for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). The matter is now finished with.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 12 JUNE

Members successful in the ballot were:
Mr. Andrew Robathan
Mr. David Congdon
Mr. Rod Richards

Earth Summit

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew MacKay.]*

4.39 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): Just over two and a half hours ago, the United Nations conference on the environment and development, the Earth summit, began in Rio de Janeiro. It is a unique event. Representatives from more than 160 nations are expected to attend. More than 100 of those delegations will be led by Heads of State or Government. It is the largest ever gathering of world leaders.

One of the first of those leaders to make the commitment to attend personally was my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. His personal commitment reflects the leading role that the Government played in all phases of the complex preparations for the conference over the past three years.

In a moment, I shall set out in detail the goals towards which we have been working, the contribution that the United Kingdom has made to achieving those goals, and the ways in which we plan to take forward the process after the conference is over. I will first say a word about the context in which the conference takes place.

Almost exactly 20 years ago today, 113 nations met in Stockholm for the United Nations conference on the human environment. That was the first global discussion on the fate of our planet. Only one Prime Minister attended that meeting. The House will not underestimate the significance of the large number of Heads of Government attending the Earth summit. Their presence at a gathering of that kind concentrates minds. It focuses attention on the issues. It lifts their place on the agenda.

The Stockholm conference took place at the height of the cold war. The Soviet Union and the eastern bloc countries refused to attend. At that time the international agenda was dominated by the need to avert the threat of a global nuclear holocaust. Few then could see an end to that threat. Today it is much reduced, and we live in a saner and safer world.

The problems that we are addressing at the Earth summit are hardly less important for the future of mankind—and they are no less difficult. Winning the cold war took great vision to see that, despite the difficulties, peace was possible. It required a clear sense of the scale of the endeavour, so as not to have unrealistic expectations about the pace of progress. It called for hard realism about achievable goals so as not to be tempted into fallacious and potentially fatal policies by the allure of easy-sounding solutions.

Putting the planet on a course towards sustainable development will require those same qualities of vision, sense of scale, and realism. Those are the qualities that the Government are determined to bring to the task, which is why I do not share the pessimism and faint-heartedness of those who so glibly dismiss the Earth summit as a failure before it has even begun.

Our overriding objective at Rio is to begin a process. It will be an evolutionary process that will lead to action to deal with the problems of the environment and development that we must and shall overcome. We must begin that process in each of the areas that we are addressing at the summit.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I thank the Secretary of State for his words so far, and do not dissent from them. I am also grateful to the Government for giving the House the opportunity to debate this subject today. Given that only three paragraphs of the Queen's Speech dealt with this topic, why have the Government waited until the very last moment before allowing a debate for which there has been great demand, but which the Government have resisted until now?

Mr. Howard: I am not sure that matter is for me. The normal procedure is to make a statement and, where appropriate, to allow a debate, after such a conference has taken place, so that progress can be reviewed and the Government can report. That is the course that the Government intended to follow. I am delighted that this opportunity has arisen in the course of a crowded calendar, because it enables us to discuss those matters at an early stage in the conference.

The first of the policy areas that we shall address at Rio will be the creation of new international legal institutions to deal with immediately urgent problems. The most important and difficult of those agreements is the framework convention on climate change. We have also been working towards a convention to protect the planet's great diversity of plant and animal species, and to adopt a declaration on the protection of forests—to provide the foundation for a future convention on that increasingly important issue.

Secondly, we shall set out to agree Agenda 21—a comprehensive framework of action by Governments, international and regional organisations, and other bodies. Thirdly, we seek an agreement on a statement of principles on environment and development—the Rio declaration. It will update and reinforce the 26 principles agreed at the Stockholm conference. Those principles have provided a firm foundation for the development of international law over the past 20 years. We are looking to the Rio declaration to provide an equally durable basis for the next two decades.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As the Minister for Overseas Development knows, I have entered into long correspondence on the biodiversity treaty or convention. Will the Secretary of State, at some convenient point in his speech, set out the reasons for the Government's hesitations and reluctance in signing that treaty? The right hon. and learned Gentleman has heard the Malaysians and others say, "If you can't implement the biodiversity treaty, why should we do what you want in relation to our forests?" That is a crucial matter.

Mr. Howard: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall come to that important point. I am sure that he is the first to realise that concern for biodiversity does not necessarily equate with signing a particular document or agreement.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Will the conference be discussing the policy advanced by third-world countries, that the rich countries of the north should cut their consumption to ensure that the earth's resources are rationed so that our children and grandchildren can benefit from them?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman puts that point in his particular way, but it does not actually correspond with the way in which the matter is dealt with in any of the documents, agreements, or declarations that are before the Earth summit. The summit will discuss matters of that kind, and ways in which development can take place in harmony with the environment. I hope that the summit will be able to reach agreement on those matters.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): The Secretary of State says that concern for biodiversity does not necessarily equate with a willingness to sign the convention. Has not the right hon. and learned Gentleman claimed that he and the Government played a part in the preparatory work on that convention? If he is not prepared to give an undertaking to sign it—I hope that he will, right now—what other instrument is available to him as a means of proving the concern that he expresses in general terms?

Mr. Howard: I shall deal in some detail with the biodiversity convention. I was making the point to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that one should not equate concern for biodiversity, which we clearly share, with a particular convention or agreement. The reason relates to the particular terms of the convention, with which I shall deal later in my speech.

I was talking about the principles and aims contained in the Rio declaration, which we hope will take forward and update, in an effective and constructive way, the principles that were agreed at Stockholm some 20 years ago. To support those aims, we also set out to develop more effective ways in which to help developing countries to finance their part in meeting global environmental challenges.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Secretary of State bear in mind the fact that, during the past 20 years, there has been an acceleration of the transfer of wealth from the poorest to the richest on the planet? There has also been an acceleration in environmental destruction in third-world countries, largely because of the economic policies that have been imposed on those countries by the International Monetary Fund and the World bank.

Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to recognise that the world economic structure is fundamentally wrong, and that, until there is some justice in it, the destruction of the environment—especially in third-world countries—will not only continue, but worsen?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman will not be astonished to learn that I do not agree with his analysis of what has happened in the past 20 years, or with the reasons that he has given for what has happened. The Governments of most of the countries to which he referred do not agree with his analysis either.

I do not know whether it is now the Labour party's view that the policies of the International Monetary Fund are not sensible or appropriate. Of course, we understand Labour's sensitivity in relation to the IMF, but I was under the impression that its policies enjoyed widespread support.

We intend to improve the flow of environmentally beneficial technologies to developing countries, and to strengthen the international institutional arrangements to support sustainable development. The Government have played a leading role in the efforts of the international community to achieve those goals, and I believe that we have every reason to take pride in that role.

[Mr. Howard]

As the House will know, on 9 May the United Nations intergovernmental negotiating committee adopted a convention on climate change. That followed 16 months of difficult and delicate negotiations. The convention will now be opened for signature during the United Nations Conference on environment and development, and the United Kingdom Government will sign it at Rio.

Those who have attacked the agreement on the ground that it is empty of content or lacking in specific commitment cannot have taken the trouble to read it with any care. It commits all the signatories to devising and reporting on the measures that they propose to take to combat climate change. It also specifically commits all the developed countries to giving a lead by taking measures aimed at returning emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000.

Through the global environmental facility, it will provide a mechanism for financial support to meet the agreed incremental costs of projects in developing countries. We have undertaken to provide the GEF with new and additional resources for that purpose if others do likewise.

I believe that the outcome of the negotiations represents a significant first step in the global response to climate change, but it is only a first step; others will follow. It is a sensible precautionary response, delivered while we improve our scientific understanding of climate change. As our knowledge develops, it may become necessary to make further commitments to limit emissions: that is why one of the most important aspects of the convention is the strong process that it has established for review of the action being taken by parties to the convention, and of the need for further action.

The draft biodiversity convention contains many useful elements. It would pave the way for individual countries to set up a network of protected areas to safeguard habitats. It would assist countries—particularly those in the tropics, where most important sites of biodiversity are located—to devise plans that meet their national circumstances. It would contribute to the global benefits of conserving as much biodiversity as possible. It would facilitate the sharing of benefits, in the form of potentially valuable biological resources, between the countries providing them and those that develop them.

But—yes, there is a but—the financial provisions of the draft convention have caused us a good deal of concern. They are drawn broadly, and, on the face of it—given an appropriate interpretation of them—it is possible that they would allow the conference of parties to the convention to determine the amount of contributions that would have to be made by other countries, including the United Kingdom. That is not yet settled. We continue to examine the text very closely, and we are exploring urgently ways in which we can safeguard our position and which would enable us to sign the convention without finding ourselves signing a blank cheque. I very much hope that we shall be able to sign, and we are making considerable efforts to achieve that objective.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that the agrement on funding mechanisms for a consensus on payment within the biodiversity treaty is similar to agreements contained in other treaties—for instance, the Montreal protocol, to which we have already agreed? Were not the steps taken in the biodiversity agreement intended to answer the points raised by the North countries? Is that not a totally spurious reason for rejecting the treaty, which has been advanced now purely to protect the interests of America, rather than honouring the principles contained in the treaty?

Mr. Howard: I assure the hon. Lady that our position on that question has nothing to do with America's position. The Americans have expressed a number of concerns about the biodiversity treaty which we do not share. They object to a number of clauses which we consider perfectly acceptable. Our position in relation to the treaty is far from identical to that of the United States.

I listened with great interest to the first part of the hon. Lady's question. That may indeed be a possible interpretation of the arrangements that the convention seeks to establish, and if, on examination, it turns out that it really is the better interpretation, we shall sign. We are looking very urgently for a way in which we can do so.

Mr. Dalyell: Like my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), the Secretary of State is an able lawyer. I am not a lawyer, and I realise that intellectual property rights are a legal minefield. Let us take, however, two examples: the Madagascar periwinkle, and the liana plant from Cameroon. It is claimed—and there is some evidence to support the claim—that the liana is a possible antedote for AIDS, while the periwinkle is valued for its fruit.

What intellectual property rights, in the form of money, would accrue to native peoples? They produce the knowledge that has put western scientists on to the possibility that the examples that I have given may have important medicinal properties—knowledge that can be reproduced in the Amazon. Those who have been to Belem and the Goeldi institute, and have seen the work of Elaine Elizabetsky, know of the enormous potential for native peoples to obtain some of the benefits of medicinal plants which are of great benefit to western pharmaceutical companies.

Mr. Howard: I hope that I can allay the hon. Gentleman's anxieties. We are content with the provisions in the convention for dealing with intellectual property rights. That is not our concern; it is the concern of the Americans. Our concerns are different. I have sought to explain them. I very much hope that we can overcome them.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): When we are dealing with the American point, is it not correct to point out that American Congressional opinion, which was made evident when the Earth summit was debated at a meeting of the North Atlantic Assembly, does not run in parallel with that of the Administration? Congress has been pressing the Administration to go much further and to sign the agreements arranged for the Earth summit, which at this moment it would appear the Administration are unwilling to do.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend knows full well that it is usually the case that Congressional opinion does not run in parallel with that of the Administration. I am not sure that I would follow my hon. Friend's speculation as to where the balance of Congressional opinion lies. I do not

think that there is unanimity in Congress on these matters, but it is clear that there is a difference of view between Congress and the Administration.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way to me again. We on this side of the House have been listening with great care to what he has been saying about the difficulties, as he sees them, in signing the biodiversity convention, but let me press him on that matter, so as to be sure of his position. Does he say that it is only and solely his concern about the cost commitment that causes the Government difficulty, and that if that were to be resolved to his satisfaction he could sign the agreement? Since the Secretary of State has presumably been very much involved in the drafting of the convention, and since he is well equipped to take a view of its legal meaning, what is his opinion on the matter?

Mr. Howard: I must disclaim any responsibility for the drafting of this document. It emerged during the negotiations in Nairobi. The discussions took place at official level. They were not decided on a vote. They were the outcome of a very protracted series of negotiations. Our officials, who were present at the negotiations, at every stage made clear our reservations in relation to these particular clauses. As I suggested to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), we are looking very carefully at the text to see whether we can sign.

I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's question directly. That is the primary obstacle to our signing. It is not the only one; there are one or two others. However, I very much hope that we shall be able to overcome all these obstacles and that we shall sign the convention.

The text of the statement of principles, the Rio declaration, is agreed. It contains useful principles for future action. It includes the precautionary principle. It stresses the need to avoid use of the environment as a disguised restriction on trade. It endorses the "polluter pays" principle and the importance of environmental information. We have made much progress in achieving a final form also for Agenda 21, covering some 40 different areas for action. Agreement is in sight on the institutional arrangements to take the Rio process forward after UNCED. I very much hope that we shall be able to reach agreement on that.

In addition to our part in the negotiations—which, as I have indicated, was a very prominent one—the United Kingdom has made a number of other significant contributions to the overall success of UNCED. We have brought forward our own target for reducing our emissions of carbon dioxide. We were the first country to make a specific commitment to make available new and additional resources, provided that others did likewise. We have assisted a number of developing countries with the costs of preparing their contributions to Rio. We have financed the organisation of a vigorous preparatory process for non-governmental bodies within the United Kingdom, and we made available $1 million to lead an international effort to prevent the collapse of the global forum of non-governmental organisations in Rio—and much else besides.

I have set out our contributions to the success of Rio in some detail so as to put into perspective the allegations that are frequently made about this Government's efforts on the environment, but there is another area where our approach has frequently been misunderstood, or consciously misrepresented. That is the area of our financial contribution to sustainable development.

There will undoubtedly be a great deal of debate in Rio on financial issues. The measures needed to protect the environment and to achieve more appropriate patterns of development throughout the world will undoubtedly have substantial costs as well as benefits. The developing countries will need help in achieving the new patterns of sustainable development. The single most important assistance that they need is an improvement in the world trading system.

The recent breakthrough in the common agricultural policy reform opens the door to the possibility of completing the Uruguay round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade reform and of giving real meaning, real hope to the development of the economies of the south. In subsequent rounds there, increasing attention will need to be paid to the linkages between trade policy and the protection of the environment. I have no doubt that the discussions in Rio will emphasise that important message.

When the Indonesian Environment Minister came to see me a couple of weeks ago, he readily acknowledged the fact that trade was far more important than aid, not only in terms of the development needs of his country but in terms of the extent to which they were going to be able to improve their environment. For some of the poorest countries, their burden of debt drastically restricts their capacity to make the necessary economic reforms and to tackle environmental and developmental problems.

Britain has consistently taken a lead in action on debt. Since 1979, we have relieved developing countries of over £1 billion of old aid loans, and all new aid to the poorest countries is given on grant terms. In September 1990, when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was Chancellor of the Exchequer, he proposed to the Paris Club a new set of Trinidad terms for the poorest countries, to relieve some or all of their outstanding debt. The international community must do more. We must build on that excellent start and offer further improvement to the Trinidad terms.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I am sure that the Secretary of State is right to identify the crippling burden of debt as one of the major problems that faces undeveloped nations. Would he care to give figures to illustrate what the burden of that debt now is throughout the world and how countries are likely to be paying back very much more this year both to this country and to other developed nations than they are receiving in aid, such is the scale of the debt burden?

Mr. Howard: I suggested that the initiative that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister took when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer was a very important first step and that more needs to be done. I believe that more will be done and that we shall be in the forefront of those efforts. As for the specific point raised by the hon. Gentleman, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State who is to wind up the debate will seek to provide him with the figures for which he has asked. However, I am sure that both he and I are at one in recognising that this is a continuing process. I hope that he welcomes the leading role that the United Kingdom Government have taken.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I understand what has been said about the Trinidad terms, but according

[Mr. John Denham]

to a recent parliamentary answer that I received, the projected official debt payments from the poorest countries to the United Kingdom, far from falling in the coming financial year, are expected to increase. Does not the Secretary of State agree that that is a disappointing position in which to be nearly two years after the Prime Minister launched the Trinidad terms?

Mr. Howard: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's point is much the same as that which I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will deal with the details when he winds up the debate.

We have also increasingly emphasised environmental concerns in the aid that we give to developing countries. Assistance with population programmes, the protection of forests and reforestation, energy-saving programmes and other environmentally friendly developments feature increasingly strongly.

In the last two years, we have played a leading part in helping the World bank, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme to fashion a new instrument, the global environmental facility, for assisting developing countries with the additional costs of environmental measures taken in those countries to protect the global environment. We have already committed significant resources to this facility and have made it clear that we shall be ready to commit new and additional resources to this fund at the appropriate stage to replenish it. This will enable it to provide resources to support the developing countries in undertaking their commitments under the climate change convention and for biodiversity projects.

In all these ways, we are making a positive and significant contribution to the financial discussions involved in the Rio summit.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): One of the hypocrisies of the Rio summit is that it has taken the destruction of one major rain forest to print all the bumf that has been circulated.

Mr. Howard: There is no doubt that there is an awful lot of bumf—anyone who has had anything to do with the preparations for the conference can hardly fail to agree with my hon. and learned Friend.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in the House yesterday, Rio

"is the start of a continuing process."—[*Official Report*, 2 June 1992; Vol. 208, c. 704.]

The process set in train by the Earth summit will not end on 14 June. It will evolve and lead to further and yet more effective action to deal with the important global problems that we all face. No one should underestimate the importance of evolutionary processes of this sort or minimise their potential for good.

We have experience of the effects that can be achieved. Our White Paper on the environment, "This Common Inheritance", has at its core the argument that environmental management is a continuing process. That White Paper established the mechanisms of green Ministers in every Department, integration of environmental policies across Government, collective target setting and progress chasing. We pursued that process in our first anniversary report and I shall ensure that the second anniversary report builds on and develops the strengths of its predecessors.

This process has taken the United Kingdom to the forefront of the implementation of environmental management of national policies. Rio offers us the chance to begin the same incremental process on a world scale. It is essential that we succeed and I believe that that will be the real achievement of the Earth summit. The right instruments must be forged to ensure effective progress long after all the delegates have left and the conference halls are empty.

The key elements are good and timely science, constant monitoring of the state of the environment, realistic commitments to improvement, practical measures for tracking targets and relentless progress chasing. The Government have the political will to adopt that approach and to pursue it with vigour. We shall be using our substantial international influence to involve other countries in the same process. I intend to do my utmost to ensure that our children look back on the Earth summit in Rio as a critical turning point for the future well-being of our planet.

5.12 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): The Danish referendum on Maastricht has opened up for us a new debate on a future European agenda, for which we might all have good reason to be grateful. It has also provided us with a more immediate opportunity to debate an even more important topic. That topic is nothing short of the very future of our planet—its future as an ecosystem for all species and as a home for our own species and its future generations. Questions of war and peace, poverty and plenty and equity and survival are involved in the issues that will be discussed at the Earth summit in Rio.

The tragedy is that the summit, for which such high hopes were held, now seems destined to be a disappointing failure. It will be all the more disappointing because the early signs, even from the Government, were relatively encouraging. As the Secretary of State has pointed out, the Prime Minister was one of the first to pledge his attendance at the Earth summit. He followed that up with a welcome speech at a conference organised by *The Sunday Times* on 8 July last year. It was a speech full of fine phrases and apparent commitments to an environmental agenda. The reality has turned out to be somewhat different. That early ardour has cooled. The air has been thick with warnings about not expecting too much, about how difficult it will all be and, above all, how much it will cost.

Like his immediate predecessor, our Prime Minister has hastened to show that he is aware of the environmental agenda. He has even made speeches that have put items on to that agenda. However, having done that, he has shown that he does not have the slightest idea what to do about environmental issues. The reason for that is not very difficult to find. One does not need to be a great political philosopher or environmental expert to detect that, like his predecessor, the Prime Minister is fine with the high-sounding phrase, but when he is confronted with the politics of intervening in the free market—that is what we are faced with—he backs off rapidly. There is nothing that equips those on the right in politics to intervene to protect the wider and longer-term interest that we call the environment.

Mr. Corbyn: Does my hon. Friend recall that only a few years ago the Government introduced the Antarctic Minerals Bill—the paramount example of putting free enterprise ahead of the interests of the world environment—and that they were finally forced, unwillingly, to sign a moratorium on minerals exploration in the Antarctic? Should they not now announce, at least as a gesture of goodwill towards the summit, that they will introduce a Bill to cancel what is now the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989?

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend has pointed to yet another instance. We are seeing an unfortunate repetition of it writ large with the Rio summit. The Government simply do not accept that anything other than market forces will resolve these issues. That was Mrs. Thatcher's view. I am encouraged by the Secretary of State's apparent open disagreement with his former leader on this issue. He is shaking his head and I regard that as at least some progress.

Mr. Howard: I had hoped that we could approach this issue on a relatively objective and non-partisan basis. Only yesterday I accused the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), in an entirely different context, of living in a fantasy world. He has confirmed that description far sooner than I had expected. Of course we accept that there are occasions when it is appropriate to intervene in the workings of the market to achieve environmental and other objectives. We accept that regulation has a part to play. We have always accepted that. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's predecessor accepted that. The hon. Gentleman will recall that I was responsible for putting through this place the Water Act 1989, which contains numerous regulatory provisions. It set up the National Rivers Authority, which is the most effective environmental watchdog we have. The hon. Gentleman is tilting at windmills.

Mr. Gould: The Secretary of State hardly chose the happiest instance of his willingness to frustrate the workings of the market when he pointed to the privatisation of the water industry. I do not mean to patronise him, because I know that he is relatively new to this brief. Therefore, he may not recall the former Prime Minister's widely reported speech to the United Nations in which she shocked her audience, and certainly a wider audience, by insisting that market forces were the means by which the environment would be protected. She went further by saying, memorably, that the multinational corporations were the great instruments of environmental protection.

If I understand the Secretary of State correctly, I think that this is a remarkable instance, perhaps the first on record, of his disagreeing with his former leader. We have to say now that the language, if we are to believe it, is welcome, but we want to put him, his Department and the Government to the practical test. We want to see precisely what he will sign when he goes to Rio at the end of the week.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman cannot get away with that. Of course market forces contribute a tremendous amount to improving the environment, but there are occasions when one needs to intervene. I suppose that there is no better example than using market forces to encourage greater use of lead-free petrol—one intervenes but one does so by working with the grain and by using market forces. It is a measure of how much the Labour party has to learn that it still does not understand such basic lessons.

Mr. Gould: I have no doubt that, given time, the Secretary of State will think of even more instances, but the truth is that what he says is not borne out by the Government's inability over a long period to translate rhetoric into action. The reason is that they fight shy of and stop short of the politics of intervention which come naturally to our side of the political argument—*[Interruption.]* Yes, and I say it proudly. We are in politics because we know that the community must intervene in the short-term, narrow, selfish and fragmented working of the marketplace if we are to protect the wider and longer-term interests which we have become accustomed to describing as the environment.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay) *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I must make a little progress and then I shall certainly give way to the hon. Lady.

The changed tone or the shift in the debate from the high expectations created by the Prime Minister in July last year is well caught by the opening words of a recent article by the Secretary of State in *The House Magazine*. It began with the assertion:

"Sustainable development is a fashionable new phrase."

I wonder whether he understands what a dismissive flavour there is in the words "fashionable", "new" and "phrase". They contain no recognition of the fact that the Rio summit itself is the direct consequence of the Brundtland report which established sustainable development, which was already common currency among environmentalists, as a fundamental principle for expressing concern about our environment.

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman cared to read on, he would know that I explained what was meant by the phrase and how important it is.

Mr. Gould: I have no doubt that the Secretary of State wrote a substantial article thereafter, but I am entitled to point out that the opening sentence shows that he does not understand that sustainable development is not "fashionable", "new" or merely a "phrase", but that it is at the heart of environmental concern and of the great international efforts now being mounted to make protection real and sustainable.

The new atmosphere was intensified by the fact that in advance of the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, the junior Minister—the Minister for the Environment and Countryside—was sent to Rio as a sort of advance party. His function was clearly to damp down expectations. At the same time, behind the scenes, a major diplomatic effort had been made to use United States recalcitrance to scale down the aims of the Rio conference and to enable us to shelter behind its very much diminished objectives.

The new Secretary of State has concentrated not on persuading the Americans to recognise their responsibility but on making common cause with them in frustrating the world's environmental agenda. It has been a disreputable collusion which does this country no credit. It has involved us in a complex game plan to wreck the conference and to ensure that it achieves nothing other than hot air—the last thing that the planet now needs.

[Mr. Gould]

The first element was to shift Rio's agenda. It began as the summit that might help to change the direction of policies that now threaten the future quality of life for millions of people across the globe, but instead the Government and the Americans managed to shift the key question to merely whether George Bush would go. That suited the Government, who had become increasingly concerned about the determination of most of our European partners to do something about the looming environmental crisis.

Rio presented big problems. The Government would either have to change their policies wholesale or break ranks spectacularly with our European partners on an issue of great importance and interest to millions of voters. I believe that that is why the Secretary of State was so happy to seize on the United States position. He presented himself as the honest broker, telling the Europeans that they would have to tone down their expectations and policies if they were to expect the Americans to attend at all, without even having to mention in passing that he would like policies weakened in exactly that way.

Mrs. Gorman: Does not the hon. Gentleman think it possible that President Bush was revising his view of the issue on the basis of scientific information being produced by agencies such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in his own country, which has thrown grave doubts on the concept of global warming? On that basis, perhaps President Bush is taking a second look.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Lady will understand if I say that I have heard her express that view before. She claims scientific expertise in order to judge these matters, but I am entitled to say that she is in a tiny minority and she has ranged against her the world's leading experts and the United Nations panel on climatic change.

Mrs. Gorman *rose*——

Mr. Gould: The hon. Lady has been able to express her views on a number of occasions. She defies the huge preponderance of scientific evidence.

Mrs. Gorman: Is not the hon. Gentleman aware that a document has been issued at the Rio summit—signed by more than 200 of the world's leading scientists, including 54 Nobel prizewinners—which expresses exactly the view that I have attempted to express in the House?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Lady must accept that the United Nations intergovernmental panel on climatic change, which brought together the world's leading experts, reached the considered view that global warming is a problem which poses a real threat to the world environment. Furthermore, it acted on what I believe to be the only proper principle—the precautionary principle, with which I shall deal in a moment.

We should not have been surprised by the shift of emphasis by the Government. Our reactionary collusion with the United States is exactly matched by the Government's existing environmental policies at home. Why should we be surprised at what will happen in Rio when the Government have ridden roughshod over their commitment to environmental impact assessments in cases such as Twyford down and Oxleas wood and when the promise to legislate for an environmental protection agency made no appearance in the Queen's Speech?

Our role in ensuring that the climatic change convention contains no binding commitments on targets is prefigured by the sorry saga of our role in the European Community's position on that issue. For years, the Secretary of State's predecessors dragged their feet, refusing to join our European partners in agreeing to freeze emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000. Belatedly, the Secretary of State's immediate predecessor dropped that refusal—which was very welcome—thereby conceding, incidentally, that the target was not impossible or impracticable on technical or financial grounds.

Typically, we demonstrated that what was missing from the equation was the political will to act. We made it clear that we would not act unless others did so. We then ensured that the United States and others would veto any agreement that contained binding commitments and targets. Notwithstanding the hon. Lady's testimony, the result was a tragedy for the world environment and a denial of the basic tenet of environmental concern—the precautionary principle—which dictates that it is the environment which must be given the benefit of any doubt.

I sometimes think that we do not understand the nature of environmental damage and degradation. It can kick forward as though on a ratchet: once it has happened it cannot easily be turned back. That is why the precautionary principle is essential and why it is such a tragedy that it looks like being ignored in Rio.

The picture is drawn even starker in terms of the biodiversity convention. In the speech on 8 July last year to which I referred, the Prime Minister said:

> "We may be destroying plants that could help us to adapt to environmental change. We are losing species faster than we can catalogue them. It is as if the owner of a great gallery of pictures were to slash or destroy a Renoir or a Rembrandt every day. Such destruction betrays our future."

Those were fine words; it was a good speech. Now we know that once again those words mean nothing. The United States is jibbing at the cost and, true to form, we now hear the same message from British Ministers—that we, too, will have difficulty, on cost grounds, in signing the convention that we did so much to shape and draft.

I was interested to hear the Secretary of State concede that, although cost grounds were our primary problem, they were not the only one—that there were other difficulties as well. We face the prospect that, whatever happens in Rio, the Secretary of State has prepared a position from which he will be able to say that an objection remains to prevent us from signing.

Those are massive disappointments, but what will really count as the failure of Rio is the refusal of the developed world to change its pattern of consumption, and the consequent condemnation of billions of the world's poor to poverty, disease and death. Again, the only message that we get from Rio is about the refusal of the rich developed world to pay the Bill for change, with the excuse that the recession makes it impossible to afford that bill.

If we rely on the recession as an excuse, how are we to persuade desperately poor countries that the environment must be taken seriously? Their excuses carry rather more urgency, conviction and weight than does our recession. They suffer the crippling burden of debt, the adverse movements in the terms of trade and the pressing problems of poverty, malnutrition and disease.

Sir Peter Emery: Does the hon. Gentleman, in all honesty, suggest that he, or any Government, should give control over the amount of money to be raised to a majority of the nations which will contribute very little? I should like a direct answer to that question, because it embodies the main difficulty that many people have to solve.

Mr. Gould: It is wrong to assume that the people who suffer the consequences of the unequal pattern of consumption in the world economy are making no contribution. That is their contribution—and they look to us to make a commensurate contribution, which we are too mean to make. That is why we are unable to offer a moral lead, which we should be able to give. Furthermore, we are unable to offer the material help that we should contribute. If we say that the recession makes it impossible to tackle the problems affecting the environment, we must not be surprised if others follow that lead.

Again, the Government have set a sorry example.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman has conspicuously failed to answer the specific question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). If the convention required developed countries to make whatever contribution developing countries decided to be appropriate, would the hon. Gentleman sign it?

Mr. Gould: I began by referring to the Maastricht referendum, and I have not noticed any reluctance among Conservative Members to sign up for internationally agreed arrangements under which we must make huge payments, beyond our control, to some of the world's richest countries in the European Community. I am not saying that that is wrong, but one cannot justify it while jibbing at the much smaller contribution demanded of us by some of the poorest countries in the world.

On the question of being prepared to devote resources to help the poorer and developing world, the Government again set a poor example. The Prime Minister may say —as, astonishingly, he did—that on aid we are leading in terms of quality and quantity, but the facts are against him, and those facts are shameful.

Not only have we consistently failed to meet the United Nations target for aid of 0·7 per cent. of GNP, but the share has fallen from 0·51 per cent. in 1979 to 0·27 per cent. last year, which puts us shamefully near the bottom of the international league table. In 1990, the first time, we reached the point of taking more from the developing world in debt repayments than we returned in aid. As my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) said in an intervention, those debt repayments are set to rise, not to fall. The Government have failed the third world and, as a result, they have failed the environment.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): If my hon. Friend is about to leave the subjects of aid and poverty, may I ask him first to comment on the fact that poverty affects women disproportionately and that it has been clearly shown that resources put into women's hands are used better both for people and for the environment? Will my hon. Friend ask the Government what they intend to do to ensure that aid is used to increase the power and control of women, to the advantage of the environment?

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend makes an important point, which should be enshrined in the work of the Earth summit in Rio. Many people agree that what has often gone wrong with our limited aid effort is that it has often been designed more for the benefit of construction companies in the developed world than to put economic power and opportunity into the hands of those whom we are trying to help.

As a consequence of that failure, we have failed the environment. We cannot expect poor countries to concern themselves with the longer-term future of their natural resources—their forests, rivers and soil—if we force them to exploit those resources commercially in the short term to meet their debt repayments. We must tackle the problem of the debt difficulty.

We need a proper aid programme; altruism is not enough. We need a sustained and comprehensive aid programme from the Government. The impulse to personal generosity, although always welcome, cannot do the job. We need new arrangements through the GATT, which could, as the Secretary of State rightly said, take advantage of the reform of the common agricultural policy. That would be small enough in itself, but it would be a welcome step. The test will be what happens in the GATT talks, which do not even address the problems of third-world trade. We must act to restore some semblance of fairness in world trade.

The Rio conference was planned with sober purpose, but with high hopes. Those hopes are now in the course of being dashed. W. H. Auden said:

"We must love one another or die."

Love is in short supply at Rio. Sadly, it is death which is now on the agenda.

5.37 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): We are witnessing one of the most extraordinary events in modern history—a vast jamboree of people going down to Rio, apparently with no less an objective than to save the planet. I cannot think of a more exalted objective for a conference. Enormous numbers of people are going, as in some vast mediaeval crusade. We are all going to Rio apparently riddled with guilt because the industrialised west is consuming more than its fair share of the world's assets, or so we are told. Presumably we are to go through some form of absolution, which will consist mainly of us forking out more money for what is now called the south, but which used to be called the third world, or the poorer nations.

However, the conference is not really about conservation and science at all, but about politics and economics —that is the basis of what will be debated in Rio. More than once in this House I have taken the opportunity to point out that much of the muddled mish-mash of subjects to be dealt with during the conference is rooted in the most bogus and inaccurate kind of science. Today I am gratified to see that a group of more than 200 of the world's leading scientists—including, as I said earlier, 54 Nobel prize winners—have come out with a statement pouring scorn, if not doubt, on much of the science which is apparently undermining the demands being made at the conference.

Of course we are all against pollution. Of course we all want to clean up our act and to see that industry pays, as my right hon. and learned Friend has said so often, for the toxic or unpleasant material that it produces. Of course the question of population troubles all of us. However, I am more concerned today with the ridiculous business of global warming. I assure the House that it is poppycock.

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[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]

That is not my unscientific view; it is the view of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which observes the Earth's climate from outside Earth. It has monitored the climate for more than two decades, and it insists that there is no significant or appreciable increase in the temperature of the globe over that period.

It also points out that there is no evidence that holes in the ozone layer—which do not exist in any case, because there are merely thin and thick patches—are caused by any chemicals produced on Earth. It asserts that they are probably due to the reaction between the Earth's magnetic force and the activity of the sun, especially the irregular activity of sun spots, which are, of course, vast forces outside the control of us mere mortals and therefore largely ignored by those who seek controls on the industrial activities of man.

I want to put that argument into context. More than 75 per cent. of the globe's surface is water. Of the land mass, less than 15 per cent. is habitable. The rest is polar ice caps, deserts and mountain ranges. We have reduced the area occupied by humanity to a tiny part of the surface of the Earth. Of that area, less than 5 per cent. has industrial activity taking place on it which produces toxic or noxious substances. We must get the issue into proportion. Greenhouse gases consist largely——

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mr. Dalyell: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gorman: Not at the moment.

Greenhouse gases consist almost entirely of water vapour, which is a product of the evaporation of the vast surfaces of water. Again, we can do nothing about that. We do not talk about water vapour as a greenhouse gas. We talk only about carbon dioxide, which represents less than 300 parts in 1 million of the Earth's atmosphere.

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gorman: I will not give way.

That tiny amount of gas is greatly welcomed by the plants of the Earth, for which it is a vital raw material in photosynthesis—the more they get of it, the better. Even if we are producing more—some scientists agree that we are—it will do nothing more than stimulate much of the vegetation which we all favour preserving. Although it is unpleasant to live next to a factory——

Ms. Jackson: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gorman: I will not give way at this point.

Although it is unpleasant to live near a factory that gives out unpleasant gases, and although we should all like to see that cleaned up, there is no scientific basis for attacking the car industry and our industrial activities if one is condemning them because they give out carbon dioxide.

Dr. Bray: As the hon. Lady knows, I have given her credit in the past for some reading of the background material, which I have also tried to follow. However, she has got somewhat confused on a number of the details. Will she oblige the House by placing in the Library the references to the scientific literature from which she draws her facts? By that I mean the original literature and not just the journalistic write-ups of that literature.

Mrs. Gorman: I shall be pleased to do so, and I will also give the hon. Gentleman the names of a number of scientific journals and of a number of leading scientists in this country who agree with much of what I am saying, but who are not given a hearing because they do not say what the promoters of these ideas want to hear. I will do my best to oblige the hon. Gentleman.

I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to be extremely cautious about signing something that will involve the west in vast expense to do with alleged global warming which is probably complete nonsense. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will eventually come round to acknowledging that. I do not want to dwell too long on the details, because I have explained them in the House before.

Biodiversity is another issue. Although the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) likes to pour scorn on my association with the subject, I point out that I have been involved in biology for the whole of my working life. I am a qualified scientific biologist and I have spent a great deal of my professional time involved in it.

I appreciate the need to do something to protect species that are endangered. I put it to my right hon. and learned Friend and to Opposition Members that, far from requiring the kind of regulation which my right hon. and learned Friend envisages as necessary to save the attractive features of life on Earth, the opposite is true.

Almost all the countries in which livestock, precious animals and plants are threatened and in which pollution is rife have a large measure of Government intervention. The pollution about which we complain largely comes from eastern Europe, where there was massive intervention. It is a product of state intervention; state intervention is not the solution.

Ethiopia, which faces serious problems, has had its economy and ecology destroyed by interventionist Governments such as Opposition Members would recommend. Ethiopia was once a net exporter of food to other parts of Africa and it had vast forests. When the land in Ethiopia was in the hands of private individuals and was private property, it was protected, preserved, looked after and sensibly used. It was not exploited and destroyed as it has been in recent years.

I urge my right hon. and learned Friend in his trip down to Rio to consider biodiversity from the point of view of the marketplace. I suggest that, if one wants to protect something and if one wants it to be preserved and developed, one makes it private property. I support the countries in Africa such as Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia, all of which are pleading with the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species people to make a market in the by-products of endangered species such as elephants. Those countries believe that they can preserve those stocks if they have the money and if there is an incentive for their people to farm those stocks in the same way as they would cattle.

The principle of private ownership can be applied to the world's rain forests and to other desirable areas. Instead of flinging money at Governments with almost no constraint, we should target our aid on the development of private forests on the lines of our national parks—on places where people who have a vested interest can look at the plant material and find ways to turn it to the use of mankind, in

which case it will be preserved. It is almost always Governments who allow people to ravage the land and to slash down forests.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way on the issue of vested interests and rain forests. The vested interests that operate at present in the Brazilian rain forests are so concerned about those forests that they do nothing but cut them down. What is the hon. Lady's response to that? Private industries, which in many instances have private armies, are involved. Some 18 million hectares of Brazil are owned by 1,000 families. The Government cannot exercise any restraint over the activities of those people. They are destroying not only the rain forests but the indigenous species which live in the rain forests. At the same time, they are destroying our climatic balance.

Mrs. Gorman: The hon. Lady asks me specifically what we can do to stop these tragedies happening. The Governments of the countries in question have sold pieces of land to private exploiters. I suggest to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State that, if we wish to be involved in preserving those areas, we should ensure that our money goes to buy them and turn them into protected private property. We could then ensure the benign management that we see in national parks all over the world. That is the way to do it.

Ms. Jackson: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Gorman: No, I am not allowing the hon. Lady to intervene again; she will have to sit down.

That brings me to the green movement. The greens are an extremely odd lot. They appear to hate mankind more than anything else. They seem to be agin humanity. They seem to want to make human nature neater and tidier and less greedy than it actually is. They are involved in a zealous crusade of the kind that has cropped up over the centuries among different groups—usually among religious people.

I put it to the House that those people are harmful to the very organisms and systems that they wish to preserve. They seem to have the curious idea that man is big and strong and nature is weak, and that we must intervene to preserve nature. I wish to refute that view entirely. The mechanisms exist already and we in Britain have embraced those mechanisms—market forces—as a means of developing the precious assets that we wish to keep. That is the line that we should follow.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, as he goes down to Rio, to bear in mind the object lessons that Britain has learnt: if a country wants to improve people's standard of living, to make life better and to preserve the good things that it has, it should not go in for socialist ideals, with people in green wellies with red linings telling it what to do. Instead, it should apply the capitalist principles that have contributed to the high standard of living that we in Britain enjoy. We should not give in to the idea that we in the west are guilty of creating difficulties for other parts of the world. Those countries have difficulties because they still have the remnants of the kind of socialist regime that the Opposition would claim as the solution to the problems.

5.51 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am not going to be tempted to reply to all the details of the speech made by the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). To say the least, hers is not the majority view on the subject. When she gets up on that high horse of hers, as she often does, she can perhaps best be described as a few trees short of a rain forest.

On the specific issue of climate change, of course there are always dissenting voices in a scientific community and of course there is no single cause of climate change. But as the Rio conference has made clear, the 300 members of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change take a view different from that expressed by the hon. Lady. Of course people will dissent from the panel's view and argue against it, but the world's experts have been brought together to pronounce on the matter and, as the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said, many of us in any event believe that the precautionary principle should govern our policies. I hope, therefore, that it will be not the hon. Lady's view but the much more substantial and considered view of those other experts that prevails when our Government and others debate the issues in Rio.

At last, the Government have been tripped into having a debate on the Rio Earth summit almost by accident and literally at the last moment—indeed, some moments after the opening of the Rio conference. Since the beginning of this Parliament—and, indeed, during the last Parliament—the Government have resisted this debate. The Secretary of State mentioned the subject in his speech on the Loyal Address. The Gracious Speech contained four lines on the environment and *Hansard*'s report of the Secretary of State's speech contained three paragraphs on the subject.

My party has regularly pressed the Leader of the House for a debate on this subject at business questions and senior members of the three largest parties in the House have signed an early-day motion calling for a debate. Eventually, yesterday, my hon. Friends and I were forced to table a motion of no confidence in the Government when still we got no change. At the eleventh hour, today's debate has come by accident. I am glad that we have been given a debate but the Government's previous position was not acceptable and I gather that they are unusual among participating democratic Governments in deeming it sufficient to report back and debate the conference after the event. It is a bit late then. As the Secretary of State knows, the other place debated the matter a few days ago, and it would have been both politic and, I hope, beneficial had the Government taken the attitude that we, too, should have had a debate before the conference.

Having said that, I want to be as constructive as I hope others will be on the subject of what we should do. I share the view of the Secretary of State, expressed by Mr. Maurice Strong, that one could be pessimistic about such a conference but that one should not be. There was great pessimism before the 1972 Stockholm conference, but in the event it was a good conference, resulting in many recommendations. One of the clear consequences was the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme and many Governments round the world who set up environment departments—although, to be fair, our own predates the conference—and started taking the issues more seriously. Sustainable development became

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part of the language of debate thereafter. We should not write the conference off. We must assume but hope that people will work to attain the best possible results.

In our no confidence motion, we have already highlighted what appear to be the three principal issues that the Secretary of State and his team and the Prime Minister will take to Rio for debate and on which the House, and certainly the Liberal Democrats, look for positive developments and conclusions. The first is finance: everything comes down to finance in the end. The Brandt Commission set the 0·7 per cent. of GNP as the development budget target some 22 years ago. Not only have we not reached that target; arguably the prospect of our doing so is receding. I shall not become involved in technicalities. The figure for Britain has been about 0·35 per cent. and now it has slipped a bit. In recent months, we may have been getting marginally nearer to it or further away—and I read what Baroness Chalker said, answering for the Government, in the other place—but that is a detail. The fact is that, many years after the target was set, we are way short of it and, when Baroness Chalker was asked yesterday what our target timetable was, she said —as the Government have said since 1979—that there is no timetable for achieving the 0·7 per cent. Unless we—one of the wealthiest countries in the world—are willing to make a commitment to reach, and reach soon, the target of contributing that relatively small proportion of our national wealth towards the redistribution of wealth in the world, we are not making a proper contribution to the Rio summit, to addressing the issues or to our partnership with countries far less well off than us.

The second issue is that, although we will sign the climate convention, that convention has been watered down and carries neither the degree of obligation nor the bite that it was originally intended to have and that it could have had. By removing both the commitment to specific targets—targets that the Government have now accepted for their national policy—and by saying that certain things will happen only when other people do the same, we are losing our ability to lead on the issue. Unfortunately, it is too late to do anything fundamental about it because, like the other convention, this convention is a take-it-or-leave-it document. That is to be regretted and the Government are to be criticised—indeed, condemned—for it.

The third issue, to which I shall return, is the wavering and havering about the biodiversity convention, which has already been the subject of exchanges.

We could all cite many examples to illustrate the nature of the global environmental crisis, and the House has debated some of the specifics quite often. I shall cite only two, which were most recently effectively presented on the front page of today's edition of *The Independent*. There are of course many examples and there is little dispute about some of the statistics. I should add that it is good that the press, radio and television are taking the issue seriously and covering it fully; I certainly do not criticise them for that. There is always a danger with a so-called jamboree, but it is better that the subject is covered and gets into people's living rooms than that it is not covered at all.

The first example relates to the increasing number of people in a world with limited resources. The world's population has increased in 20 years from 3·84 billion to 5·47 billion. So long as the population increases by that dimension, the duty on us to look after our resources grows equally proportionately. Our natural resources cannot increase. Our space is the same and the amount of water, forests and land for plantation on which we depend does not increase.

Secondly, we are, at the same time, losing many of the co-habitants upon which we depend for our lives and livelihood as a human species. We often talk about rain forests. As the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) regularly reminds us, we all depend on them, and on all the contributors to our biodiversity, not simply in relation to our ethical position as their stewards, but also for the scientific advance of humanity. In 20 years we have increased the amount of rain forest which we lose per year from 100,000 sq kms to 170,000 sq kms—nearly doubling the amount that we lose per year. We are also fishing some of our fish stocks almost to extinction. We are therefore removing many of the components on which a mutually interdependent world depends.

The fundamental issue at Rio is perhaps more one of democracy than of anything else. In this country we argue about democracy, mandates and the entitlements of majorities. We forget that the rich west is a small minority. The world's majority comprises the third and fourth worlds of the poor east and south. The obligation on us is to transfer democratically that which, by good fortune, we have been given unequally and to share it more equitably and democratically around the world.

I accept the propositions of my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) to the Prime Minister yesterday. The test of our policies is whether we leave the world with more people in poverty or fewer. Although it is a matter of plants, creatures, forests, oceans, climate and atmosphere, we must also consider whether we can sustain the people who are on this planet.

If we increasingly drive more and more people into poverty and death through malnutrition, if people are driven to extend the deserts because of their need to find food to survive and if people chop down rain forests in order to grow something else, we are also damaging our common environment. The unequal distribution in the world means that the poor are driven to act in that way to survive. The Secretary of State understands that argument. That is the essence of the debate. A rich advanced country like Britain must therefore show leadership. We must show that we understand the problems and that we are willing to transfer resources so that the environment of us all is not diminished.

In this context, I repeat a point put to the Prime Minister yesterday by the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). Although it may be a side issue for the conference at Rio, how we treat human beings in countries like Brazil is no less important than how we consider what grows in Brazil and countries like it.

I hope that the Secretary of State, the Prime Minister and his colleagues will raise with the authorities in Brazil the need to ensure that the disgrace of abduction and killing of children, who are regarded as vermin in that society by certain people in positions of authority and responsibility, is dealt with. Those who are incapable of defending themselves must be treated justly. I hope that there will be a formal representation that justice should be done to ensure that the guilty people and the perpetrators

of that behaviour are dealt with. That should be a by-product of the fact that the heads of so many Governments are going to Rio in the next few days.

With regard to the financial discussions, I understand and welcome the Secretary of State's support for the global environmental facility. However, it has not been made expressly clear whether the Government intend that there should be a commitment as well to increase the amount of aid. Aid can be better targeted but it should also be increased absolutely to the 0·7 per cent. by a targeted deadline. We should also provide funds for the global environmental facility.

The Secretary of State is aware of the figures. As I understand it, the United Nations official estimate is that the developing countries require about $125 billion per year to achieve Agenda 21——

Sir Peter Emery: That is new money.

Mr. Hughes: Yes, indeed, new money. Current Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development aid is about $55 billion a year. That means that there needs to be $70 billion of new money. The hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) is quite right. Unless that money comes not just from us, but from the west as a whole—the affluent parts of the world—it will not be possible to implement the commitments to which I believe that we are asked to agree in principle in Agenda 21 and in other documents at Rio.

There is no excuse for the sticking point about the implementation of Agenda 21 being the unwillingness to provide a proper contribution to that funding operation. That is a matter not of drafting but of understanding that if we are to achieve things there must be an additional commitment of an adequate sum. I hope that, when the Secretary of State returns, he will report a satisfactory conclusion.

I understand that aid moneys may need to be tied and that we should not simply hand out money wastefully. There must be monitoring of expenditure. However, there must first be a commitment to give the money. I do not believe that the British people would object to the principle that this country should contribute more and as a result of the conference.

With regard to the biodiversity convention, there is one point that I do not understand. I believe that there are two potential difficulties about that convention as perceived by the Government. The first relates to the administration of funding. The Government are worried that, if that is left to individual countries, it could be open to abuse. If that is so, we must try to deal with the problem but not resile from signing the convention. That is a practical matter in terms of implementation. It should not prevent the principle of support for the idea of biodiversity being sustained by an international and legal binding agreement.

The second difficulty is more technical and, again, I understand that it is troubling Ministers and is a reason for Ministers wavering. There is a clause in the convention which, if it is interpreted in one way, would probably force western biotechnology companies to pay more for third-world natural resources such as rare plants.

Perhaps the Secretary of State will say that that is not a problem. However, if it is a problem, I believe that the market force argument might work. If a country has a rare species of plant, for example, it is absolutely right that a company should pay the proper market price for it. I do not understand how we can be wavering about this. We played a key part in the drafting—*[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State has not yet said that he is going to sign the convention. I would willingly give way for clarification. The convention has been in its final form since 9 May.

Mr. Howard *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hughes: If I am wrong, I should be happy if the Secretary of State would correct me. I cannot understand how we were so instrumental in the drafting in which our civil servants did a good job—even the non-governmental organisations acknowledge that in general they did a good job—and yet we have delivered a document which Ministers now anticipate that they may have difficulty in signing.

Mr. Howard: I fear that it may take a considerable time to correct all the hon. Gentleman's misapprehensions, if he will forgive my saying so.

The negotiations for the treaty on the climate change convention were completed on 9 May and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is right in saying that we played a prominent role in the preparations for that treaty. I discussed the text of the document in Washington, and said this afternoon that we should sign it in Rio.

There are difficulties with the biodiversity convention. Although it is true that we played a prominent role in the preparation of that document, the ultimate text emerged during discussions in Nairobi, and the officials who represented the United Kingdom at that gathering made plain throughout what were our reservations to that text. However, those reservations do not include the matter which is currently exercising the hon. Gentleman. I understand his argument about what should be paid for rare plants which are taken from the developing countries. That troubles other countries, including the United States, but we are content with the provisions affecting those matters in the convention.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful. That is helpful and must mean that the only thing left to trouble the Government is——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Money.

Mr. Hughes: I heard what the Secretary of State said in his speech. I hope that I am not tripping up the Government by quoting one Minister in the same Department against another, but the Minister of State who is in Rio said that the matter of "fundamental concern" was that arrangements on funding negotiated in Nairobi on biodiversity appeared to have departed from the formula agreed for funding the convention on climate change. He then said:

"We must assume that the meaning and the intention has changed."

The principal issue is whether we are willing to put in the funding. The Secretary of State has to bite that bullet and to say that we are.

Mr. Howard *indicated assent.*

Mr. Hughes: In that case, there is a practical way to deal with how one secures and processes the funding. If the document passes all drafting procedures and ends up practically on all fours with the other convention, which is apparently the case—that is the advice of those non-governmental organisations and others I have talked

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to who have studied the documentation carefully—there is no good reason of principle why the Government should not sign it in Rio.

I suggest to the Secretary of State that there is also a political dimension. I am vice-chairman of an NGO, Wildlife Link, which represents 46 wildlife bodies in this country with a membership of between 4 and 5 million people, and have talked to its representatives today. They are clear that, if the Government do not sign the convention, they are unnecessarily setting the most appalling example.

Will the Secretary of State consider the worldwide political aspects of signing, as well as studying the fine print as a lawyer? I hope that he will understand the significance of the important issues of principle at stake and of the Government's position.

Mr. Howard: I agree. We want to sign, as I made clear in my speech, and I hope that we shall be able to do so. I recognise the arguments that the hon. Gentleman has advanced. Hopefully, we shall be able to sign. However, he must recognise that, when it comes to taking a final decision on whether to sign such a convention, one cannot do so as a matter of principle. One cannot sign conventions in principle; one has to put one's signature to a text. That is why it is part of the Government's responsibility to examine the text closely and to ensure that it does not lead to difficulties. I hope that we can overcome those difficulties, and we are striving to do so.

Mr. Hughes: I think that the Secretary of State and the Government may be playing a clever game, trying to look as if they are not going to sign and then doing so—like producing a rabbit out of a hat and saying, "Look what we have here; aren't we good girls and boys." I hope that that is not the case. The document got through the drafting of their expert civil servants, who thought that it was satisfactory, as I understand it.

Mr. Howard *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hughes: The briefings seem to have changed slightly. The Secretary of State understands the significance. It is a take-it-or-leave-it document, presumably subject to the qualification of some derogation in statements. It is important that the document comes back signed, and I hope that it will do so.

The Government have clearly also said that the follow-up structure is also important. It is no good having a vague commitment to a mechanism for a review. As the Secretary of State knows, one of the possibilities is a sustainable development commission—a body charged with a permanent function, accountable to the Secretary General, the Security Council or the UN General Assembly. That will put a new brick in the UN structure. We should support it.

The Security Council deals with global military security. We need a similar body to deal with global environmental security. Let that be monitored worldwide. Let us support that proposed body and ensure that there is some sort of ombuds-bureau where people can make complaints if things are not being done properly so that there can be a proper follow up.

The Government have played a fairly skilful diplomatic role in the run-up to the summit, despite the fact that they have rightly been criticised for watering down some of the commitments and conventions. When the Prime Minister goes to Camp David and on to Rio, and when the Secretary of State goes to Rio during the next few days, I hope that they will realise that we do not want a Government whose diplomatic skills are directed solely to agreeing to the lowest common denominator. We do not want a Government of the unprincipled consensus; we want one of principled leadership. It is time for the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State to claim that mantle and opportunity, to get away from any fudging and to stand firm. If they stand firm on some sound environmental principles, the citizens of the globe and the globe will benefit. If they fudge it, it is not merely the Government who will live to regret it.

6.16 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) emphasised the importance of principles, and I certainly do not dissent from that view, but I am afraid that he betrays his party's lack of experience of the realities of government. It is essential for Governments to study the practicalities before putting their signature and this nation's signature to any piece of paper.

I strongly welcome the Rio summit and congratulate the Government on the constructive part that they have played in the preparatory work for it. Clearly, it is necessary for the international community to work together to monitor the development of the world's ecology, to improve it where necessary, to maintain it and also, when necessary, to take remedial action. To that degree, surely no one could challenge or disagree with the idea of a summit.

Inescapable dangers are inevitable with such institutions—I am trying to avoid using the word "jamborees" —and with such events. There is a danger that expectations will be raised far too high. The obverse is that the failure to meet those expectations will result in disappointment and disillusion setting in, and that reaction will be unwelcome and unjustified.

There is a danger that some people will view the summit as a one-off event and that, once Rio is finished, they will think that all is done and nothing else need be set in train. As my right hon. Friend emphasised, Rio can only be the beginning of what will always be continual and steady work to ensure that our ecology is maintained in the way in which we, and future generations, would wish.

The Rio summit contains two other dangers. I do not point them out to be negative, but against a background of my support for the general thrust of the venture. The first is the danger of what is coming to be known as eco-terrorism—the deliberate hyping of global warming and all the other dangers, which is often done on the basis of little or no scientific knowledge. I certainly do not claim any special scientific knowledge, unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman).

The second danger is that the political correctiveness that we have learnt to suspect and to challenge on the Conservative Benches is being accepted too glibly. That tendency is too often manifested by Opposition Members of all parties. That is one of the dangers.

The other danger is that posed by the attempt now being made to divert the Rio exchanges from the necessary and valid exercise of seeking to monitor the ecological

situation in the world, to a re-run of the perennial debate between the developed world and the underdeveloped and developing world. The entirely understandable and persistent attempts of the south, or whatever we choose to call it, to extract more and more resources from the north may be a legitimate objective from its point of view, but no good will come to the Rio effort if we allow one debate to be confused with the other.

On the ecological situation, we are wrong to fall for all the glib, doom-laden forebodings that have filled the media for many years. Such predictions are made by politicians from the Green party, who are, happily not in the House, and by many Opposition Members. The facts are not clear and they are debatable. We have had exchanges in the House about whether the Earth is warming. I shall not exchange the names of authorities across the Floor, because none of us is in a position to make a judgment on which authorities are right and which are wrong. The verdict is not proven.

That is also the case with fossil fuels. We are all anxious about the impact of fossil fuel use, but I believe that the fastest growth in the use of such fuels occurred in the generation from 1940 to 1970, when world temperatures fell. We have heard a great deal about how sulphur dioxide is an Earth-warming, greenhouse gas, but the latest research suggests that it acts as a smog mirror that reflects the Sun's rays away, thereby cooling the Earth.

Many examples cannot be accepted at their simple face value, but that is the great danger to which the Rio enterprise is vulnerable—a simple-minded, wholesale acceptance of the predictions of the doomsters, or the Jonathon Porritt syndrome, if I may call it that. One way to reduce pollution would be to give such doomsters less air time than they seem to get at present.

The Secretary of State referred to the interesting intervention at the Rio summit by 200 scientists, which includes 54 Nobel prize-winners. Those scientists said:

> "We are worried, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, by the emergence of an irrational ideology which is opposed to scientific and industrial progress and impedes economic and social development".

That statement, coming from such a source, should be treated with extreme seriousness by all Governments and all of us who take an interest in such matters.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am afraid that I have not heard all of my hon. Friend's speech, but I have great respect for his experience in these matters. If he had watched "News at Ten" last night, he would have seen that a special part of the programme was devoted to Kiribati. According to the story and the commentator in Kiribati, the sea level is rising because of global warming, and that coral archipelago and its most delightful people are likely to be flooded as it sinks beneath the sea in two or three decades. Is my hon. Friend concerned about that? Does he believe that that change is being caused by global warming?

Mr. Whitney: I did not see that programme, and I do not think, with all respect to my hon. Friend and the programmes he watches, that we can receive the basic scientific information that we need from such television programmes. Generally speaking, the rise in the sea level is accepted as being nothing like that threatened.

However, my hon. Friend has highlighted the need for a scientific audit of the Earth and its changes. It is surprising that such an audit does not exist in any acceptable form. Of course, a number of studies of all types have been conducted but none of them can be accepted incontrovertibly. One of the summit's aims should be the establishment of funds to set up earth stations and other scientific facilities which are necessary to conduct such a scientific audit. We will then be able to conduct our discussions on a more adequate basis than last night's television programme.

I return to my anxiety that the thrust of the debate in Rio is shifting, from a sensible concern for ecology and the environment to a re-run of the debate about the north's responsibility for and its relationship with the south as a result of international aid. For 10 years of my life, I held various jobs with direct responsibility for and involvement in the operation of Britain's overseas aid programme. That experience strongly reinforced my political instinct that, although the transfer of Government aid can be effective —Britain's programme is one of the most effective in the world—it is far less significant than is usually accepted or believed by most politicians. As the Secretary of State said, trade and good trading conditions are far more important to any developing country than any amount of aid.

The other conclusion to which my experience led, quite unchallengably, was that, unless the political and social conditions are right in the developing countries, no amount of external aid, however well intentioned, will achieve the results that we wish. One can consider example after example, but I shall cite just two.

There is no earthly reason why Taiwan and Hong Kong should be anything like as economically successful as they are, given the natural resources that they enjoy. Although it is true that Taiwan benefited from an American aid programme in the 1950s and 1960s, its success has been based on the success of its people in achieving their own economic miracle. The same is true of Hong Kong.

In contrast, we should consider countries such as Ethiopia, which has been mentioned, and Tanzania. Tanzania has probably received more aid, per capita, than almost any other country on the planet, but, sadly, because of the political mistakes of successive regimes and its long flirtation with socialism, those massive aid resources have not brought anything like prosperity, to put it mildly, to its people. We must watch extremely carefully any suggestion that that can be achieved.

More credit should be given to what Britain achieves in our aid programme in terms of total flows. We always hear about the 0·7 per cent. of GDP, a target never remotely achieved by the Labour Government, incidentally. That is conveniently forgotten——

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Whitney: What we have achieved is more than 1 per cent. of total flows. That shows an effective transfer of resources.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): May I point out to the hon. Gentleman that this Government's aid programme is exactly half the level left by the Labour Government in 1979? If he is proud of that, I am not. The recent proposal by the Dutch in Strasbourg—that countries should agree to try to reach the United Nations target by the year 2000 —was also opposed by the British Government.

Mr. Whitney: It is interesting that the hon. Lady did not challenge what I said: neither this Government nor the Labour Government ever came remotely near attaining the 0·7 per cent. target.

Mr. Watson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Whitney: No.

It is important to remember the facts when we talk about the transfer of resources, and we must always bear in mind the terrifying examples of Ethiopia and Tanzania. There are many more.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) suggested that a further $70 billion be transfered, with no apparent checks attached. That would be ludicrous. Meanwhile, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), when pressed time and again by Conservative Members to say under what conditions a Labour Government, heaven forfend, would sign the agreement in question, characteristically refused to answer. He left us with the impression that a Labour Government would have signed a blank cheque.

That would not be sensible for this country or for the north in general; nor would it be sensible for countries which have yet to develop. Their development, as 50 years of experience have shown, can be achieved only when the political and social conditions in their countries are right.

There is general agreement about the need for progress on GATT. The transfer of resources issue must be disentangled from environmental issues, and in that disentanglement the achievement of an agreement on the Uruguay round is crucial.

Conservative Members and those on the right of politics have nothing to be ashamed of in this area. We bring clear thinking to it, in stark contrast to the thinking of the hon. Member for Dagenham, who sought to inject a note of party politics into what should not be a fiercely partisan debate. He suggested that right wingers have no regard for ecology, and implied that left wingers have. We, however, will never forget the impact of the socialist regimes of the Soviet Union and eastern Europe and the environmental monstrosities and horrors that they created.

This has been a fortuitous chance to debate Rio. I am confident that the Government will go there with their mind clear about the dangers to which I have referred. I only hope that the British public and media will clear their minds and not fall for cheap eco-terrorism or the attempt to confuse two singularly important but distinct issues—the problems of ecology and the problems of international development.

6.34 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) plays an active and valuable role in the House in relation to Latin American affairs, so I was a little surprised to hear him use the word jamboree. He knows as well as I do that the Brazilians and others have gone to enormous trouble to arrange this conference, which has been difficult to organise.

Mr. Whitney: When the hon. Gentleman reads the record he will find that I apologised in advance for using the word. I am happy to withdraw it; I applaud the summit.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not think it is a jamboree; it is an extremely important conference.

I wish to say a quiet and gentle word to the Secretary of State. As this is an all-party issue, would it not have been sensible to invite representatives of the Opposition to join the delegation—I am glad that the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister are going—along with representatives from the Liberal party and the nationalist parties? The British House of Commons should have been represented jointly on this issue. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will, I think, confirm that the Liberals, like the Opposition, were not invited to join the delegation.

Mr. Simon Hughes *indicated assent.*

Mr. Dalyell: It is not satisfactory that this should be seen as a partisan issue. I understand from my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that a Labour Government would have included in the delegation to Rio a Conservative shadow Minister or two.

I should like to ask certain specific questions. Yesterday, prompted by a good question by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), the Prime Minister said:

"We are working hard to make sure that we shall be in a position to sign the convention. As the hon. Lady knows, this country leads the world in scientific expertise on biodiversity, not least at Kew, and we play an important international role in attempts to achieve a convention that can be signed generally. A number of countries have financial concerns about the convention, and the particular concern, which I hope we shall be able to overcome, is that the financial articles imply an open-ended commitment to provide developing countries with additional finance, without the necessary corresponding commitments to conserving biodiversity. That is not of any interest to us or to them."—[*Official Report*, 2 June 1992; Vol. 208, c. 702.]

This contrasts with a letter that I have received from Lady Chalker, dated 22 May, whom the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd) represents in this place. I had written about the biodiversity convention on the first rumours that it might be in difficulty—particularly about the global environment facility. Lady Chalker replied:

"Britain has been a strong supporter of the Global Environment Facility from its outset. We are one of the largest contributors to the pilot phase, providing £40·3 million".

Incidentally, I have given the Minister's civil servants a copy of the letter to aid greater understanding of what I am getting at.

"We see the GEF as having a key role as the multilateral funding mechanism to finance the incremental costs (i.e., those not justified by the benefits to the country in which the activity takes place) of actions developing countries carry out to implement their obligations under the climate change and biological diversity conventions. We have accepted that the GEF will need to evolve to fulfil this role. We were pleased that the participants in the GEF agreed at the April meeting to create a new Participants Assembly which will oversee the GEF implementing agencies (the World Bank, the UN Environment Programme and the UN Development Programme). The Participants Assembly should ensure that there is a voice in the GEF for all the developing countries which are party to either the climate change or the biological diversity conventions, as well as giving due weight to the funding efforts made by developed countries."

That is not the language of a Government who would hesitate to sign the biological diversity treaty. What has happened in the meantime? The letter goes on:

"The assembly will approve work programmes containing the projects under consideration for funding by the GEF."

The letter goes on to deal with the April meeting, but I shall spare the House that detail. It concludes:

"Britain is ready, subject to other developed countries joining us, to replenish the GEF with new and additional financial resources to help developing countries implement their obligations under the climate change and biodiversity conventions. This is an issue which I expect to discuss further at the Earth Summit in Rio next month."

Why are the Government reluctant? My colleagues must have heard the Malaysians and others on the radio. What does one say to developing countries which say, "You want us to do something about protecting our rain forests for global reasons but you cannot even sign the biodiversity treaty that was conceived in the first place by Sir Crispin Tickell and other distinguished British civil servants and others"?

Secondly, I should like to return to the question that I asked earlier about intellectual property rights. The Secretary of State is a distinguished lawyer and he knows that patent law is difficult. I agree with him that trade is more important than aid and that his Indonesian colleague was surely right. The Madagascan rosy periwinkle has both vinblastine and vincristine. Those drugs cope with, if anything can, childhood leukaemia and they also cope with Hodgkin's disease. The Madagascans are desperately short of currency and surely they are entitled to some of the benefits that accrue to the great pharmaceutical companies in the west which have used their knowledge. The same reasoning applies in the tackling of AIDS with liana from Cameroon, another desperately poor country.

Only 1 per cent., if that, of plants have been examined for medicinal properties and the other 99 per cent. must have potential. Yet so many species are destroyed, unexamined. I do not get that information only from written scripts because Professor John Dale of the university of Edinburgh, the dean of the faculty of science, put me on to his biological sciences advisory committee and I was able to check with some of Britain's most distinguished botanists.

Thirdly, we are endangering the planet's capacity to sustain life and depleting our ecological capital. The term "possible ecocide" is not too much of an exaggeration. I understand that in 17 of the 42 low-income developing countries the daily calorie intake per capita was lower in 1986 than in 1965. The warnings in the Brandt and Brundtland reports have changed from amber to a red alert. What are my colleagues and I to say to people such as George Medley of the World Wide Fund for Nature who yesterday organised a petition on the green outside the House for the tree of life? Many of my colleagues signed it, but I did not because it contained certain matters relating to sustainable timber and sustainable supplies that I could not accept. We must not underestimate the force of public opinion that is represented by the WWF and others. We often talk about the will of the British people. The hon. Member for Wycombe ran down television programmes such as "Fragile Earth" and the programmes transmitted by BBC2 on Sunday evenings. Those programmes are quite perceptibly changing public attitudes.

The Secretary of State spoke about improving the flow of environmental technologies. What did he mean? I would be a little more convinced if I could see examples. The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is taking notes. Perhaps in his winding-up speech he will give us some examples.

I was fortunate enough to have an Adjournment debate on the ozone layer on 4 March. The report of the debate starts in column 413 and it was answered by the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry). When I raised the issue of crop protection and UVB, I was told that a good deal of research was being carried out in the agriculture departments of our universities. Only yesterday morning, Brian Jordan emphasised the importance of this work for crop protection. What will we be able to say to people in Rio about our work against UVB?

The Secretary of State spoke about the network of protected areas. What does that mean? An eco-system must be a certain size in order to be classed as such a system. At what point does destruction cause the cessation of that system? We forsake opportunities for economic growth so that problems caused largely by imprudence and profligacy in rich countries can somehow be ameliorated. I am sure that in Rio the Secretary of State will not try to lecture rain forest countries, as some Americans such as Senator Gore and others do.

The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) spoke about global warming and said that there was not much in it. The hon. Member is at odds with the former right hon. Member for Finchley, Mrs. Thatcher. One of the things on which I agreed so strongly with the former Prime Minister was her concern for the Maldive islands. Do the Government accept that there will be a 2 to 5 deg C increase over 100 years and a sea level rise of 30 to 100 cm by 2090? What are the Government figures?

The Secretary of State spoke about sustainable development. The air that we breathe is not ours alone and the seas that wash our shores wash other shores as well. Many seas and oceans have become dirty communal ponds. The atmosphere has become a polluted universal sky. What action is to be taken? These are the terrible things that are happening. What is to be the attitude in Rio towards sustainable development? This is linked to the debt burden.

There was a moving broadcast on "The World This Weekend" by José Carlos Santana, a Brazilian representing a São Paulo newspaper, who said that Brazil had paid its original debt many times over. This attitude to debt is not easy. When I was in Brazil for the Altimeira rally of the Amerindians—for clarification, I should point out that I went of my own initiative, was beholden to nobody and can therefore make my own judgments—it was at the same time as Kit McMahon from the Midland bank.

One problem is the difficulty of one bank, or perhaps two, writing off debt, and others not doing so; this must be done on a western basis as a whole. What is the Secretary of State going to be able to say in Rio about the relinquishment of debt?

I return to a question that I raised earlier today about Mauritius, and to which I shall return tomorrow and bore the House infinitely until I get full answers about it. I had the good fortune to be asked by *The Sunday Times* to review a remarkable book by Sonny Ramphal and I make no apology for reading his description of the mangrove problem.

"Overfishing is not the only culprit. Fish stocks are being endangered by other human encroachment. A particularly pernicious trend is the destruction of mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass, among the world's most endangered ecosystems. These all shield the coasts and provide vital breeding grounds and habitats for fish. Nearly two-thirds of all fish caught in the world are hatched in mangrove and tidal areas. In my own part of the world, the Caribbean, some 90 per cent. of all commercial species of fish and shellfish depend

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on mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass at critical stages in their life cycle. Yet everywhere, mangroves are in retreat, coral reefs are being degraded, and sea-grasses are threatened. Mangroves are cut for firewood or to make way for fish ponds, poisoned by pesticides from agricultural fields, or simply smothered by sediment from riverine and coastal development. As mangroves fail, coral reefs become more vulnerable to silt. Reefs are also victims of the construction of hotels or even of tourists themselves. From all this devastation they recover very slowly. Awareness of the serious damage being done to ocean habitats is growing. UNEP has an Oceans and Coastal Areas Program Activity Center in Nairobi whose work demonstrates in an outstanding way what can be done, but resources are scarce and other priorities overwhelm the fate of these often overlooked habitats."

How can we help these overlooked habitats?

I wish the Secretary of State well and I hope that he has a productive conference in Rio. However, I hope that he will keep at the top of his mind the fact that, while habitats are important, to preserve them one has to have the goodwill of the people who live in the rain forests. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) referred to the Brazilians. I recall, when I went for an interview with the then Brazilian Minister for the north, Caesar Fernando Mesquita, he said, "In your constituency, Mr. Dalyell, when anybody builds an airfield or an airstrip, you will know about it. I do not, so huge is this area. The sheer difficulty of implementing environmental policies in a country such as Brazil is an enormous task for me." Brazilians do not appreciate being lectured to by whomsoever comes from Europe or the United States. We must do this in tandem with the people and Governments of those countries. I, for one, look forward to the report that either the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State will give to the House, I hope orally, on returning from Rio.

6.54 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), whose questions are always penetrating and whose careful, thoughtful approach to this issue is recognised in the House.

I warmly welcome the fact that we are having a debate on this issue, although I am sorry that the reason for having it is that the Maastricht treaty has been put in question. I pressed my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for this debate, and I am surprised to get it so quickly and at such short notice. However, we must take advantage of the debate and make the best use of our parliamentary time.

I welcome UNCED, the Rio summit. It is a major step forward in world thinking that we can bring together in one place such a large group of experts, leaders, non-governmental organisations and affected and interested people to create what I hope is a new atmosphere in our debates on the future of the planet.

We have talked about raising and lowering expectations. I deplore the attitude of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who opened the debate for the Opposition. He suggested that the conference was a failure before it had begun and that orchestrated comment in some newspapers had written off the concept. I find that difficult to believe. Of course the negotiations will be hard —we are taking a new step. We should be seeking the support of the widest number of people, not just in our country or in Europe, but, as the hon. Member for Linlithgow said, in the many affected countries. We can bring about the necessary changes only if we have the support of the local communities in the domestic populations as well as the international concept.

I have spent much of my parliamentary time preaching the gospel of an interdependent world. Whether we want one or not, we have a world that is interdependent in terms of its economy and environment. As we see the world contract—we often talk glibly about the global village—we realise that our neighbours are not just the people who live down the road or in the next village or in the immediate vicinity. Today, our neighbours live anywhere in the world because we know about everybody's problems and see them hour by hour and day by day. We cannot turn our backs on our neighbours in need.

We tried, through the "One World" programme in 1988, to foster the concept of an interdependent world. We had a major programme in this country and across Europe which just scratched the surface. In 1990, we followed it with the "One World" broadcasting programme, which I thought was extremely good but which lost out because it did not link with the other organisations that have an interest in carrying through such programmes to the grass roots.

Many have commented on the "One World" programmes this year on television and in other forums, which led up to the Rio summit and which tried to educate and inform many people. The project has involved schoolchildren and many others in local communities. Last Saturday, 30 May, people across Europe took part in activities on "One World" day. I am happy to say that my local authority had a programme in the square of Beeston. If people wanted a sense of what it was all about, they should have seen the way that the young children responded quite spontaneously. They did not know that there would be a show in the centre of the town square. It was organised through the United Nations, and a talented group of young people put on a show about the Earth summit and the consequences of the issues that we are discussing tonight. Before it was possible to say "Jack Robinson", a group of young people were holding up banners and participating in various activities. It was extremely impressive. I was glad that many older people were similarly involved. There is a linkage between what individuals can do in their local communities and what others can be pressed to do in a much wider context.

Much credit is due to those who will work long and hard in the pre-conference deliberations. Apart from the experts from the Overseas Development Administration, the Foreign Office and the Department of the Environment, there are many others from non-governmental organisations and the World Wide Fund for Nature, for example, with expertise. I find it hard to accept that we should condemn the summit before it has even started, bearing in mind the massive amount of work that has gone into the pre-conference deliberations.

There are 27 chapters in Agenda 21 and they cover virtually every aspect of the environment. There is a chapter on combating poverty, which relates to one of the principal problems of improving the environment. I have already discussed education, training and public awareness. There is also the science of sustainable development. An issue that is close to my heart—I have seen much evidence of the problem—is combating desertification and drought and the role of regional organisations. Many

other issues raised in the debate concern the sky, the seas and all the other problems of the environment. A considerable amount of work has been done and there are blueprints within Agenda 21 that, I hope, will help us to introduce the necessary developments in future.

It would seem from the comments that have been made that there has not been top-down organisation. The approach has been to ascertain how we can help local communities and others to pursue solutions to meet their own needs and to protect their own local environments. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) is especially concerned about population, and I have no doubt that he will speak on that subject if he has the opportunity to do so.

The approach of Agenda 21 to population growth is to take up the education of women and the development of women within their communities. It has not confined itself to family planning, which has often been tried and which often has not worked.

I feel optimistic about the Rio summit. I give special credit to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who was the first leader to say that he wanted to go to the summit. He spent much time in Harare, at the Commonwealth conference, persuading others to go. Commonwealth leaders and others have told me that my right hon. Friend's approach was one reason why they thought seriously about attending the summit and decided to go.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has had an influence on President Bush. I understand the difficulties that America faces, although I do not necessarily agree with its approach to them. However, we are all politicians and I think that everybody recognises that President Bush is in a difficult electoral year. We have heard his opponents saying on television that not a cent should leave American shores in the form of aid and that all available funds should be put back into American society. It is clear that President Bush has a difficulty, and that should be appreciated. It is significant that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has ensured that the Americans will attend because the conference would have been much weaker without their presence. That must go to my right hon. Friend's credit. I am delighted that he is going to Camp David, and I hope that something even more positive will emerge from the discussions that will take place there.

In spite of everything that occupies the mind of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—my gosh, he has enough on his plate at the moment—I hope that he will go to Rio on the basis that the general election is over and that there is a long period during which we can plan. He is in a position to raise the sights and, with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, give a lead to the concept of the Earth summit. It should not be allowed to descend into a haggle between north and south. There should not be an argument about whatever percentage of gross national product we are setting aside for aid at current levels. I would qualify that, however, by saying that I have always argued for a larger aid programme; but that is not what the Rio summit is about. As others have said, it is the beginning of an essential process.

I find it hard to agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) when he talks about eco-terrorism. It is a difficult concept. Anyone who has travelled widely in the third world will have been appalled by the changes that have taken place in the countries within it. In west Africa, in the Gambia, society has begun to die during the time that I have been a Member of this place. The trees are beginning to die because they cannot reach the water levels. During my political life it was possible to drive from Banjul to Dakar in Senegal and to be under trees throughout. Anyone who undertakes that journey now will be lucky to find a tree. The land has become scrub, and in five years' time it will be desert. The same is true of Mauritania. There has been significant physical change.

That will be appreciated by those who have had the good fortune—at the same time, shocking experience—to see the picture of Africa from space over the past decade. If it is presented quickly quarter by quarter on a screen, it is clear that as each year passes the green areas contract. That is a significant example. We know that desertification is linked with drought, water and weather and weather patterns. I do not accept the concept of eco-terrorism. Instead, there should be eco-practicality and understanding.

The Rio summit presents us with a welcome change of attitude. The World bank is often criticised, but its operational directive on poverty reduction, which was published only this month, is an example of changing attitudes. Many of us have taken part in writing a letter to the new president of the World bank, Lewis Preston. I think that more than half the Members of this place signed the letter, along with about 1,000 parliamentarians from about 30 countries throughout the world. We state in the letter that we want the World bank to change its attitudes, to recognise that there is poverty, and to accept the need for the alleviation of poverty. We want the World bank to consider relevant loan technologies. Members of all parties here and parliamentarians throughout the world can play a part in influencing positive changes of attitude.

There must be a sense of urgency at Rio and an understanding of a realistic time scale within which practical and workable measures can be introduced and implemented. That might present something of a conundrum, but there must be a sense of urgency. These matters cannot be left to future generations. We must not say, "Let us measure the problems for a little longer to see whether they become worse before we take any action." There is enough scientific evidence to show that the problems exist and are serious.

As I have said, the time scale must be realistic. It is no good saying, "If we do not increase our aid programme this year or next year, there will be disaster." We must transfer resources within a realistic time scale so that the measures that will stem from Agenda 21 and from the various conventions can be implemented and given time to work. If we are to have an intelligent pattern for the future, we cannot rely on the international conventions alone. I very much hope, of course, that we shall find it possible to sign the convention on biodiversity on which we have done so much work.

At the same time, we must take a critical view of United Nations operations. It is interesting that even on defence the United States is suggesting that the United Nations should have a greater role in terms of world policing and world peace. There is a tremendous new role for the United Nations in many areas. Those of us who are involved in Angola, Cambodia, or Namibia know of the important role that the United Nations plays in those countries. However, while everyone is prepared to say that the United Nations is the only organisation that can play that role, they are reluctant to provide the funds to meet

[Mr. Jim Lester]

the cost. That is probably the subject of another debate. A system is needed that will provide the United Nations with resources to undertake the functions that we ask it to perform.

I mentioned the change in attitude among institutions such as the World bank and the International Monetary Fund. We must also examine critically regional policies. I agree with the hon. Member for Linlithgow that it is not a question of the north and south and of the developed countries dictating and even financing some of the changes necessary in other parts of the world. We should be encouraging less-developed countries to devise the kind of regional structure that we have in the European Community. Africa desperately needs a regional infrastructure and a way of developing its economy and environmental measures. That applies equally to Latin America and South-East Asia.

We need to consider also our bilateral aid programmes and the way in which we work with non-governmental organisations. Environmental NGOs have a much better public relations system, so they tend to enjoy more public support. The Earth summit is about the environment and development—the two go hand in hand. We need to ensure that the work of the NGOs is more closely integrated.

We must review also our domestic attitudes, in our own homes. A recent weekly television series showed six families in different countries—including London, Norway, America and Japan—trying to lead an environmentally friendly life. It was fascinating to see families suddenly having to think about matters that they had not considered before, in making an environmental contribution without implementing any significant change in their lifestyles.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Linlithgow felt unable to sign a certain pledge. He obviously took it very seriously. I am not sure of the wording of the pledge or what put him off. Perhaps he will explain. About nine months ago, I signed a pledge that I hope is hanging on that tree in the global forum in Rio, along with many others. It not only pledged me and my family to do something about improving the environment but asked Governments and others to take action.

Mr. Dalyell: I would not sign the pledge because it said, "I will never buy anything made of tropical hardwoods." If we say that in Brazil, the Brazilians will argue that they must repay their debts to the west many times over, and that it is a question of selectivity. I am a trustee of the Scottish hardwood charter that was devised by David Bellamy, David Norman, and Jeremy Bristoe, among others. They are pioneering a way of ensuring genuinely sustainable hardwood imports.

Mr. Lester: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that explanation. If such a pledge had been put before me, I would not have signed it either. The pledge that I signed was rather more straitghtforward in terms of the commitment that I made and its request to other Governments to take action.

There lies ahead a massive task of communication at all levels. The most important of all, which Rio needs to reflect, is the task of communicating with the individual. Governments may sign conventions and make statements, but without public commitment they will not necessarily be honoured. I hope that as a result of this debate people in this country and elsewhere will be aware of the concern for, and commitment to, environmental issues that affect us all—which will be advanced at the Rio summit.

7.14 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), whose contribution, as ever, was most thoughtful. It is refreshing and reassuring to hear views such as those he espoused coming from the Conservative Benches. The hon. Gentleman's views contrast starkly with the cynicism of the speech by the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), and the banality of the speech by the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman).

The hon. Member for Broxtowe made a good point about the photosequence of Africa. It is not, as the hon. Member for Wycombe suggested, a question of eco-terrorism or of television companies confusing witless morons who watch nature programmes; the evidence of our own eyes tells us that something is badly wrong.

When the hon. Member for Wycombe sneered at the green movement, that was unworthy even of him and his normal standards. I would listen more attentively to the green movement and those who are sympathetic to environmental problems than to the burblings of a cynical old politician.

Many issues could be raised in the context of the Rio summit, and several have already been mentioned. In addressing one point, I should not want anyone to conclude that I am not seized of all the other areas of concern.

In any report on biodiversity, the fate of the great whales and of the small cetaceans—dolphins and porpoises—must be a matter of enormous significance. I draw the attention of the House to two early-day motions signed by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House. Since 1986, when the worldwide ban on commercial whaling was put in place, Japan alone has slaughtered 7,000 whales and more than 100,000 dolphins and porpoises. The Japanese Government's record is abysmal. Their attitude to animal resources is venal. Japan stands condemned as a nation before all civilised people for the way that it treats animal resources—and it does not stop at whales. There is a saying that if it has wings and is other than an aircraft, the Japanese will eat it; and that if it has legs and is other than a chair, they will eat it. That is not a racist comment against the Japanese, but indicates that they have no respect for the welfare of other living creatures that share our planet and no concern for those of us who urge that the Japanese show more regard for the opinions of others.

The Japanese managed to get round the International Whaling Commission's moratorium on commercial whaling by claiming that they were indulging in scientific whaling. That consisted of sending whaling vessels to the Antarctic to slaughter minke whales—after experimenting to see how many were there. I put it to the Japanese that there were always fewer minke whales after they had started killing them. The meat from those whales ended up on plates in Tokyo restaurants.

That was abysmal because the good name of science was being perverted by the Japanese to get round the IWC ban. Minke whales now account for the largest stock of the

big whales left in our seas. They number about 750,000. No one knows the correct figure, because whales do not stand around in neat groups waiting for scientists—Japanese or otherwise—to count them. However, we know that there are many fewer whales now than after the mass slaughtering that went on for many decades. The Japanese do not husband the whale. The hon. Member for Billericay spoke of husbanding resources. No one husbands the whales. They are not framed, in the sense of breeding followed by controlled slaughter. Whales, however, belong to every one of us: they belong to every hon. Member, indeed everyone in the country, just as much as they belong to people in Japan, Iceland and Greenland, although we do not do any whaling.

This strikes me as a suitable occasion on which to draw Ministers' attention to the meeting of the International Whaling Commission that is due to take place in Glasgow towards the end of this month. The British Government have taken a good stand so far, and while they continue to do so they will have the wholehearted support of the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) made a good point: when issues unite hon. Members on both sides of the House, we should be able to attend international conventions and speak as a united Parliament, so that no one misunderstands the breadth and depth of feeling—indeed, in some instances, the unanimity of feeling—on some of these great issues. I am sorry that the Government did not seek such an opportunity earlier, but the Glasgow meeting will provide another chance.

At that meeting, a report will be presented to delegates—including British delegates—that will undoubtedly lead to a demand for the return of quotas. A revised management procedure will be discussed. I put it to the Government that in no circumstances must that revised procedure be used by countries such as Japan, Iceland and Norway as an excuse to resume any form of commercial whaling.

Human beings have killed far too many of these magnificent, gentle and intelligent mammals. There are only 14,000 blue whales left in our seas. The blue whale is the largest mammal that has ever lived on the planet: it is far larger than the largest dinosaur. The sperm whale has a larger brain than any other mammal on earth. The humpback whale creates music of beauty and mystery. All that should make us want to study the mystery of these creatures in great depth, rather than to kill them and stick them on a plate with the Japanese equivalent of chips. That, surely, is a disrespectful and obscene way in which to treat such wonderful creatures.

Whether we are discussing large whales or small ones, the issue is not management but cruelty. Large whales are killed with a weapon called a Penthrite harpoon—an explosive harpoon whose head has two or four barbs and to which is screwed an explosive grenade. As the harpoon enters the whale's body, the grenade explodes as a result of the delayed-action fuse. Can anyone imagine a humane way of killing any creature with an explosive grenade?

In 1986, a Norwegian whaling inspector provided a detailed account of a whaling trip. On that trip, the 16 whales that were killed took a recorded average of 10 minutes to die. One whale was hit by an explosive Penthrite harpoon, followed by a non-explosive harpoon whose use was banned by the IWC in 1982. Eventually, the whale was killed after the use of a further eight bullets.

That whale took 30 minutes to die. Although seven of the others died in less than a minute, the rest took between 11 and 30 minutes to do so. Eight received multiple injuries, and 14 of the 16 that were killed were pregnant at the time. I do not consider that to be husbanding the world's whale resources; I consider it to be utter barbarism—behaviour which should have no place in our so-called civilised world.

This is not a question of a revised management procedure. The issue is not whether enough whales are left for us to go out and kill a few more; it is all about cruelty to a wonderful, magnificent creature. I believe that anyone who wants to kill whales is a barbarian and a savage—and that applies to the Japanese, the Icelanders and, indeed, the Norwegians. I implore the Government to ensure that there is no retreat from a ban on commercial whaling and to stand firm in resisting any demands for such a retreat from any of the countries concerned. In so doing, they will carry with them the full support of the House.

7.24 pm

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): It is always difficult to follow the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), but I share his concern for animals of all kinds and his views about their deaths at the hands of man. That, unfortunately, is an experience that all species frequently undergo, for purposes such as the feeding of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West.

The subject that we are debating contains a conundrum and, in a sense, a hypocrisy. Essentially, we are suggesting that the wealth, as it is called, of the developed world, as it is called, should be transferred to the 80 per cent. of the world that is called underdeveloped, so that that 80 per cent. can develop in the same way and remove poverty. I understand, however, that we are also complaining about the depletion of the world's resources.

It strikes me as a strange and illogical equation to say that we should enable 80 per cent. of the world to do exactly the same as is being done by the 20 per cent. that is the subject of complaint. If we are concerned about the depletion of the world's resources, what contribution can we make by enabling another 80 per cent. of the population to deplete those resources? That conundrum, surely, is at the heart of the argument that forms the basis of the Rio summit.

As I said earlier, the removal of an entire rain forest was required to prepare the bumf for an exotic and magnificent fantasy—jamboree, even—in Rio de Janeiro, a city that I have often visited. I have visited the poorest parts of Rio and Sao Paulo, and other Brazilian cities, and I am not ignorant about the position there.

At 6.30 am the other day, it did not occur to me that we would be given an opportunity to debate this important subject. During the Maastricht debate that was taking place then, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones)—the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—said to me, "One of the difficulties is this: if you once crack a joke and make people think that you are witty, they will never take you seriously." Let me make it clear that I have never had a more serious message to deliver to the House, the country, Rio and the world.

Amazingly, not a word has been said in the debate so far—or, if it has been said, it has featured in a fleeting sentence—about the human population explosion. I

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declare an interest; indeed, I declare two interests. First, let me say that I will not add to that explosion. Secondly, let me tell the House that, in the face of terrible opposition, I set up the Brook advisory centre in Edinburgh, with the aim of preventing unintended pregnancies in Scotland. I did so on the day that Malcolm Muggeridge gave his sermon on "pot and pill", and the entire medical profession—let alone the Calvinist population—was seriously and vindictively opposed to the move.

Let me give the House, so that they may be on the record, some of the figures—the gunpowder of the human population explosion. If we consider those figures, the chances for the whales are nil. It is said in the Rio documents that 95 per cent. of child deaths are preventable, but what is being done to prevent them? It is said that 80 per cent. of all diseases can be cured, but what is being done to cure them? It is said that drought in sub-Saharan Africa led to 30 million deaths in the past five years, but what did the population of sub-Saharan Africa do in the past five years? It rose by 300 million.

On 11 June 1987, the population of the earth passed 5,000 million. It increases by 1 million people every three days. Every 24 hours, there are 1 million conceptions on earth, of which a third are aborted. Every year, 80 million people are added to our planet. The Queen was in China for 10 days, during which time the population of China increased by twice the population of Scotland—10 million people. I am informed by those who know that every time we increase a population of any sophistication by one fifth we have to double its infrastructure: schools, roads, universities, water, housing, medical services.

Let us consider the concept. If the present increase in the population of the world had occurred since the birth of Jesus Christ, there would now be 900 people for every square yard of habitable earth. In 1839, we first achieved 1,000 million people on earth. One hundred years later, there were 2,000 million, 30 years later 3,000 million, 15 years later 4,000 million and 11 years later—in 1986—5,000 million. In 25 years' time, there will be 10,000 million people on earth.

It is no good talking in Rio about whales, ecosystems, rain forests and all the other matters. Even at this moment, the food requirement for populations at subsistence level throughout the world has to be doubled every five years. In 10 years' time, it will be every two years. In 20 years' time, it will be every six months. Those are the matters that we should really be discussing in Rio—not how to save the blue insect or the rain forests but how to restrict what is causing, and will increasingly cause, their inevitable destruction.

I am astonished, having read the papers on Rio, that the subject of the population increase of the human species—homo sapiens, so he is called, though I do not see much sapiens about him—is not considered to be the cause of all our problems. We are fiddling with the effects of the human population increase without for one moment attempting to address it.

I have been a member of World Population Crisis for a long time. I do not know whether people realise that, despite the abominable casualties of the first world war and the second world war and the genocides of Stalinist Russia, the populations of Europe and Russia never ceased to rise during those times. I do not know whether people realise that in Ethiopia, which is suffering from famine and civil war, the population has not ceased to rise. Mozambique—seven times the size of France, one of the most prosperous countries in the world and with one of the best climates in the world—says that the fact that 60,000 people are going to die every month will only halve the increase in its population. All the nations of the world must address the issue of population control. That has to be done by education and information. It has to be done sensibly and sensitively.

Let me turn to some of the myths. If a developing country is poor, it is said that people breed in order to provide for the family. That does not explain Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, or Kenya. Kenya is the most developed country of sub-Saharan Africa north of South Africa, yet its population is totally out of control. It enjoys prosperity from its tourist industry. It is self-sufficient in hydro-electricity. Kenya has considerable wealth, compared with the rest of Africa, but its population is flying out of control.

I went to Brazil 10 years ago, when the population was 162 million, of whom 68 million were under nine years old. I wonder what the population is now? I do not know whether the Minister can tell us. When it comes to aid—as though one can sort of buy off poverty—what has happened to the aid that we gave to Brazil? It was spent on a railway line which the then president built from the capital to his constituency in the north of Brazil. That is what has happened to the aid.

Let us consider the idea that development is the best form of population control and contraception. It is not. It demonstrably is not so anywhere on earth.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have been following the hon. and learned Gentleman's argument closely. How does he explain what is happening in the state of Kerala in southern India? Does that not prove that what the hon. and learned Gentleman is saying is incorrect?

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: No. That is achieved by a simple bribe programme—people are given a radio set. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I have been through India. It is simply a holding operation—a finger in the dam that lets the water come over the top. It simply is not working. One has only to look at Delhi, Calcutta, Punjab and Kashmir, where the populations are exploding exponentially.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): I have to confess that I am not sure what is happening in Kerala, but Indonesia had to have a crash family planning programme before achieving economic success. I agree with my hon. and learned Friend that development is not the best contraceptive: it is the other way round.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. I do not wish to shock the House, but it is important for hon. Members to know the facts. If, before the end of the cold war, every nuclear weapon had been fired by both sides, after five years more people would have survived than were alive 20 years ago. There are more people alive now, and have been since 1890, than have ever died.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I can add to my hon. and learned Friend's statistics. Is he aware that all the people who died tragically in the Ethiopian famine were replaced by new births within six months?

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I can give my hon. Friend an even better figure. The people who died in the earthquake at Mexico City were replaced in 16 minutes.

Mr. Tony Banks: If we are all swapping statistics, I can add one. All 5 billion people now living on earth could stand up on the Isle of Wight. It would be like a crowded cocktail party and no doubt they would consume vast quantities of peanuts and crisps. That is the size of it. It is a question of where people are living and under what circumstances, rather than sheer numbers.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is miles out of date. The world's population was able to stand on the Isle of Wight provided that they were shoulder to shoulder, breast to breast and bottom to bottom in 1940, but that is not the case any more. I do not think that 5,000 million people from Newham, North-West standing back to back and bottom to bottom on the Isle of Wight would be an attractive sight, except that we could not feed them, they would all drop dead and that would be a great advantage.

I can give another terrible example. If the population of Egypt increases at the present rate until the year 2000, it will require four more Aswan dams to keep it in water.

It is no good just talking about the protection of the greater green-eyed dragonfly, which I adore, or the whales and all the birds, bees, animals and periwinkles that I love around my home, and it is no good talking about the poor in Rio de Janeiro or Sao Paulo, when what is causing the problems is not world banks or western Governments but the fact that we are frightened to address the question of births.

I guarantee that the majority of items on the news tonight will be about somebody dying. Last Sunday, we heard that 26 people fell off moving trains and died. One tends to die if one falls off a moving train. How many thousand million passenger miles are travelled each year in this country? In fact, how many people are conceived on trains in this country?

It is all about death. Until the media point out to us —"as in my chapel I see"—that death is something natural and should not be unexpected, postponed or wrong but that births can be postponed and prevented, there is no purpose in cutting down a rain forest so that 1 million bureaucrats can descend on Rio and eat themselves stupid on the world's resources.

7·47 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak. It is worthy of comment that a debate on UNCED has replaced a debate on Maastricht. There is no doubt that the issues involved in the Maastricht debate are of the heaviest consequence, but the issues involved in the debate on UNCED are vastly more important. What can be more important than the environment—the natural systems and resources that sustain life? I must emphasise the importance of human life so as to scotch the myth that green people are more concerned about creatures and animals than about people. It is the environment that sustains human life and that environment is now seriously at risk.

The summit and the Rio declaration, watered down as it is, are telling us that we have to learn that the present pattern of production and consumption—the economic system that we have in the world today, particularly the northern world—is unsustainable. I accept the importance of the population issue and it is regrettable that it is not being considered satisfactorily in Rio. Nevertheless, at Rio we must address ourselves to the unsustainability of our economic system and our patten of production and consumption.

Maurice Strong recently said:

"Earth Incorporated is literally in liquidation. Much of the income we are producing isn't really income at all; it's running down our capital."

Some would call him an eco-terrorist, but he puts his view as strongly as this: we have an unsustainable ecosystem, certainly in the northern world. It will continue only at terrible cost to future generations who are not too distant and possibly at terrible cost to millions of our fellow human beings now.

The other day I read an article tucked away at the back of *The Guardian*. It was an analysis of the changes in weather patterns in the Indian ocean and linked them to climate change. It stated starkly:

"The next time you see pictures of starving Africans on your TV screens, it may be directly the result of the profligate use of fossil fuels in the rich world."

That was an informed article and it was talking about now, not a remote future.

The fact that the environment is the most important issue of all is increasingly being recognised by the public at large. That point has already been raised and I wish to emphasise it. Until last summer I was a school teacher and I know that there is intense awareness of environmental questions among young people and children. There is deep anxiety among them and, to be honest, stark fear. Some conceal it with cynicism. I was recently at a function organised by Friends of the Earth in Aberystwyth in my constituency. I was getting copies of the earth pledge signed. Some young people said that there was no point in signing because it was too late to save the planet anyway. Such cynicism exists alongside fear and deep anxiety.

I hope that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and hon. Members will forgive me if I draw attention to the remarkable election result that led to my taking my seat in the House. I do not wish to labour the point, but the vote of the party that I represent and my own vote doubled. There was a swing of more than 13 per cent. and we moved from fourth and fifth places to first. I take no credit for that—please do not misunderstand me. The remarkable result was an expression of a number of factors including an upsurge in Welsh national consciousness and support for the idea of a Welsh Parliament, but what really made the difference and caused such a dramatic result was the fact that I was standing on an explicitly green programme, had the word "green" on my ballot paper, made environmental sustainability a fundamental theme in the election campaign and made the Earth summit a central issue in our election literature. It was not a central issue in the election campaign in general, but it was in my constituency. People who took part in that campaign can bear witness to the enormous enthusiasm generated among people by the fact that we made that theme central and linked it to the question of Welsh democracy and to a more decentralised system of government and a more decentralised pattern of economic activity.

We must remember that the public at large—I should say "people at large" because I do not like the word "public"—want the environmental crisis to be tackled. I would go as far as to say that they are now eager for

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radical policies to be implemented in order to tackle it. They want such policies introduced soon enough to minimise the dislocation and changes—many painful—that may be involved in altering the nature of our economic activity and social patterns.

I am convinced that people at large want results from UNCED. Politicians who fail to deliver adequate responses to and policies on this crisis will pay a price. When the time comes, they will pay a high price in terms of electoral support and an even higher price in terms of widespread condemnation. Bearing in mind the grave urgency of the situation, the need for and the people's wish for radical action, I find the events and utterances of the past few days depressing in the extreme. That has already been said, but I say it again.

To his credit, the Prime Minister led the way with his announcement that he would attend the Rio Earth summit. He raised expectations that there would be a radical agenda at Rio, but, having done that, he now warns that some people may be expecting too much and that some expectations are higher than can realistically be achieved. That has been the type of language used in the past few days. One cannot avoid the impression that it is a deliberate attempt to damp down expectations to such an extent that even the slightest step forward will be seen as significant progress. That will not do.

Why the change of tone? Is it because the Prime Minister has not grasped the monumental importance of radical change being initiated at Rio? Several Conservative Members—but not all, I am glad to say—pooh-poohed the idea of an environmental crisis. It is important that the Government distance themselves from that point of view. They must make it clear that they do not accept a minimisation of the seriousness of the problem. I hope that it is not true that the Prime Minister has not grasped the monumental importance of the situation.

We have heard about eco-terrorists. I wonder whether hon. Members would regard Sir Crispin Tickell or Sonny Ramphal as eco-terrorists. Sonny Ramphal wrote about Rio:

"the Earth Summit must represent a point of departure in the direction of sustainable living and it must be the beginning of a more resolute stage in the process of retrieving our heritage of life on earth. Because that effort has been delayed so long, we may not be able to succeed if we let the present opportunity slip."

He is a responsible man and far from being an eco-terrorist.

Does not the Prime Minister realise the monumental importance of the problem or is he prepared to sacrifice that agenda in a desperate attempt to maintain the special relationship with the United States of America? That has been denied tonight and I hope that the denials are true, but the suspicion must remain that the influence of the United States on British policy is too strong.

I challenge the Prime Minister's use of the words "realism" and "realistic" in his statements. We have heard about practicalities and the fact that we are all politicians so we understand that one can achieve only what is practicable. It is time to ask whether it is more realistic to allow disastrous climate changes, the submergence of large areas and the desertification of others. Is it more realistic to allow those things to happen than drastically to reduce CO_2 emissions? We need to reconsider that kind of definition of realism, and that kind of idea of practicality. We may now be at a stage where the usual compromises of diplomacy are no longer enough. We may now have to tackle the situation thoroughly enough to meet the need.

Britain's position on the biodiversity convention has been discussed in detail, and that discussion has made it clear that the influence of the United States has been a consideration. We are told that there is concern about possible misuse of funds by irresponsible third world Governments. There is no doubt that such misuse can take place, but if that was a reason for doubt, why was that issue not addressed during the exhaustive drafting process?

On the orders of the short-term self-interest of powerful business we stand to lose for ever priceless riches in the diversity of plant and animal life. To compare those with paintings by Rembrandt minimises their importance.

The compromise that has emerged on climate change is even more disturbing than that. There is now an intention to sign the convention, but that involves only stabilisation of carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000. Let us accept that the Americans seriously intend to stabilise emissions—they are, of course, the chief culprits, producing 21 per cent. of carbon dioxide emissions from 5 per cent. of the world's population. Yet the appalling and frightening fact is that stabilisation is hopelessly inadequate. Stabilisation is already a compromise, and the possibility of having a further compromise on that is disturbing.

Stabilisation is not adequate. Present levels of carbon dioxide emissions have caused the problem perceived by the great majority of responsible scientists to be critical. That is widely recognised by scientific opinion. If there is cause for debate about the details, we have only to call to mind the precautionary principle set out in the Rio declaration itself—unless that has been watered down even further since I last saw a draft. It is present levels of emissions which are causing the crisis.

We all know that the United Nations intergovernmental panel on climate change said that it was necessary to bring about a 60 per cent. reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. That necessity exists alongside the need to allow an increase in emissions from some poorer countries to enable them to effect minimal development in their economies.

Greenpeace has presented to the Government proposals for a 25 per cent. reduction of emissions in Britain by the year 2000. Those proposals are practicable and feasible, involving a reduction in energy demands, measures for energy efficiency, the increased use of renewables, and so on. There is no doubt that renewables have great potential, but it is striking that the funds available for research into renewables are hopelessly inadequate.

We need a radical plan of action on a global level. That is what Agenda 21 is supposed to give us. Such a plan must be pursued with the same urgency as is brought to bear at times of military threat and war. Sonny Ramphal made an interesting comparison between the need for a strong response at a time of war and the need for a strong response now. He said that the war against environmental degradation is the only war that we can now afford. That kind of urgency must be brought to bear.

It is clear that we now need to redefine what we mean by security and threat. We need not only a radical plan of action on a global level, but a lead at EC level, and from the British Government. I commend to the Government

the excellent list called "Agenda 21 for Scotland" produced by the Scottish National party. It provides a good basis for the kind of radical agenda necessary. I would add only one one factor, because the list omits the need for drastic reductions in armaments spending. The Brandt report, the Brundtland report and, more recently, the Club of Rome report made it clear that they regarded radical reductions in spending on armaments as necessary to tackle the environmental crisis. The Club of Rome report described the conversion of the world economy from a military to a civil basis as a necessary prerequisite.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I have considerable sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's argument, but there is a real danger that as the east and the west reduce their vast armouries, there is a temptation to send the surplus and the obsolete to the third world, thus increasing third world debt. Does the hon. Gentleman therefore accept that if the armouries of the advanced nations are to be reduced, that reduction should not lead to an additional burden on the underdeveloped world?

Mr. Dafis: I could not agree more. The hon. Gentleman has made a useful addition to an understanding of the dangers of the situation. Certainly we need an adequate facility for the decommissioning of weaponry. That has implications for my constituency in west Wales, but I shall not pursue that matter now.

I conclude by repeating a call that I made in a letter to the Prime Minister and to the Leader of the House, for a whole day's debate on UNCED following the conference. It will be vital to assess the outcome and examine it according to a number of criteria. Whether the conference is a success will have all kinds of implications affecting the need for unilateral policies for Britain and the EC.

I shall suggest what such an assessment of the outcome should involve. It is important to assess UNCED not by comparison with expectations about what it could achieve —either the initial expectations or the more recent, much lower expectations—but by comparison with what is required by the state of the planet and the people. Just making a start is not sufficient now. Making a start is what we should have done in 1972 at Stockholm. Not to make sufficient progress now, and not to do so quickly, must be regarded as a failure.

8.7 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I can certainly agree with the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) when he says that the environment is one of the greatest problems for the future. I congratulate the Secretary of State on taking the opportunity of slipping today's debate into an open slot, so that we can deal with some of the problems of Rio. The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North will not be surprised, however, if I do not pursue all his arguments, as I want to advance some of my own.

The Secretary of State stated with considerable force the Government's position on Rio but I was disappointed with the speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who tried to suggest that Rio was already a disappointing failure—although the conference is starting only today. That was jumping to conclusions and attempting to make a failure. I would have hoped that the debate was an attempt to encourage success, not to run down what might be achieved. The hon. Gentleman went on to say that the Prime Minister is backing off from taking positive action. If we obtain successes at Rio—there is no assurance of that—they will be very much due to the positive action of the Prime Minister as much as to the actions of any other leading politicians and Heads of State.

The House of Commons should consider one factor most fully. During the debate, we have heard more variations in scientific evidence than we have heard for a long time. From one speech, I almost thought that an argument might be made for the Earth being flat. If there is such variation in scientific evidence, there is surely an obvious need to have a Select Committee on science and technology which could consider the problems fully. I have argued that for many years, and I know that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) supports me fully. We should consider that need yet again.

In Rio, we are just starting with representations from more than 160 nations which are participating in UNCED —the United Nations Conference on environment and development—the conference dubbed the Earth summit. Of all the international conferences since the formation of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1946, this could be the most important. The conference is the culmination of more than two years of effort which has produced a series of conventions, agreements and statements of principle which are intended to address the environmental challenges the world faces today.

The road to Rio has not been smooth. Disagreements have arisen not only in the House, but generally on the scientific basis for action in some areas. Divisions have also occurred as a result of major differences of perception between the developed and the developing nations. I only hope that efforts will be made in Rio to iron out some of the differences, because the Earth summit is supposed to be the meeting at which the international community will set out its strategy for dealing with the world's most pressing environmental problems. All of us are concerned that that may not be the case. The purpose of my speech is to try to explain precisely what is at stake in one area and to analyse the issues concerning biodiversity and the difficulties that will arise if we do not obtain signatures to the convention.

There are two conventions to be signed: the climatic change convention and the biodiversity convention. There was originally a third convention on forest management, but the negotiations proved so difficult that, at best, a declaration of intent is all that is likely to be signed. It may outline general goals and the timetable for future conventions. I hope that the Government will do all that they can to support the advance of those negotiations because they are essential.

Three resolutions are to be negotiated. One will set out the institutional framework for monitoring the environment and holding nations accountable for their actions. It is most important that we should know what is being done and how after Rio, so I hope that the resolution is carried through. A second resolution involves measures to build the necessary scientific and technological capabilities, especially in developing nations, to deal with many of the environmental problems. We all know that such facilities exist infrequently.

The third resolution is concerned with the financial process and mechanisms to facilitate the transfer of clean technology to the poorer countries to enable them to develop economically while minimising harm to the environment. We have not discussed that much in the debate, but it is probably as important as any other aspect,

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We in the west should be able to ensure that the undeveloped world has the know-how and technology to enable it to meet some of the demands that we are trying to make of it.

The convention on biodiversity is intended to produce a plan of action to preserve the Earth's biological diversity. I do not know how many people understand that man's activities are driving thousands of plant and animal species to extinction each year. The convention will seek to arrest that trend by preserving natural ecosystems and, where necessary, protecting species in managed environments.

It is amazing, but true, that about 1,400,000 species of plants, animals and micro-organisms have been scientifically identified and named, although that represents only a small proportion of the total now believed to exist. In the 1960s, estimates of the total number of species ranged from about 3 million to about 4 million. Today, scientific advances allow that estimate to rise to between 10 million and 100 million. The main reason for the higher figures is the discovery that tropical regions harbour far more species than had been thought. Tropical forests cover only 7 per cent. of the Earth's land surface, but they contain more that half the world's species. Surveys of tropical rain forests suggest that the number of insect species alone could be as high as 30 million and discoveries elsewhere add to that total.

The very deep regions of the ocean were once thought to be almost barren. Having been to Lake Baykal in Russia, I have noticed that surveys now suggest that there could be as many as 1 million uncatalogued species there and one can see some of them in the museum at Lake Baykal. A recent survey in waters 4 km deep off Brittany revealed almost 800 species living in an area only the size of a large living room. Of those, 460 were new to science.

It is terribly important to bring the figures to the House. The scientific consensus is that, even though the number of species known to science increases all the time, the number of species on the planet is declining. The United Nations puts the number of species lost at between 15,000 and 50,000 a year, which is equivalent to between 40 and 100 a day. The number could be as high as 100,000. The majority are insects and plants, most of which have never been named, let alone studied, so it is not possible to say how their loss affects humanity in purely practical terms.

Another reason for concern for the species lost is that the natural ecosystem plays a crucial role in maintaining and regenerating the soil. The complex interactions between plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms, help to break up the rocks and contribute to the nutrients of our soil. Insect populations have natural ecosystems and they are needed to pollinate some of our crops. They can also provide predators which help to control our pests and parasites.

The broad goals of the biodiversity treaty are to establish a common international perspective on the problems that I have tried to enumerate and to agree on the priorities for dealing with them; to analyse the need for national and international national policy reform; to specify how the conservation of biological resources can be better integrated with development and how biodiversity is linked to related issues; and the promotion and further development of regional, national and thematic action plans for the conservation of biodiversity.

According to the United Nations, the convention should not infringe the sovereignty of national states over their national resources, and that has been one of the difficulties in the negotiations. Moreover, the convention must protect the interests of the states in which the resources are located. It must also provide incentives for conservation without inhibiting growth or sustainable development.

It is to be hoped that the convention will set out measures for conserving and using biological diversity itself, for the promotion of research, training, education and public awareness and for the conduct of environmental impact assessments. It should deal with methods of providing access to biological diversity, the transfer of technology for the conservation and utilisation of biolgical diversity, technical and financial co-operation with developing countries, to allow them to participate fully in the conservation of biological diversity and the formulation of appropriate national and international institutional arrangements. If those aims can be achieved, we shall have made major steps forward in the preservation of biodiversity on our planet.

There are so many things to which I could refer. I have been concerned with the subject for many months as the rapporteur of the North Atlantic Assembly responsible for dealing with the Earth summit. That is why I want to drive home today—as I tried to say to the Secretary of State —the fact that, in Congress, both Republicans and Democrats supported absolutely a major resolution, passed in Banff only 10 days ago, pressing the 16 nations of NATO to sign both conventions, thus going very much further than the Republican Administration, at that moment, were willing to admit.

One of the greatest difficulties is finance. The United Nations was asked to put costs to the admittedly vague items listed in the draft Agenda 21. The best estimate was that to build environmental concerns into sustainable development programmes would require a doubling of aid and that to finance environmental recovery would require a tripling of aid. The most recent figures produced by the United Nations Environment Programme suggest—as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said—that the developing world would need as much as $175 billion per year to develop without adding to the damage already done to the environment. Aid to the developing world currently stands at $50 billion, so $125 billion of new money would be needed every year. Without the assistance of the Soviet Union's contributions to the United Nations, that figure will be very difficult to attain.

Nations can, and no doubt will, haggle over the amount of new money that should be made available to assist the developing world in implementing whatever goals are agreed at the Earth summit. Clearly, some new money will have to be found, but it is unrealistic for the developing world to expect that money to be made available without specific conditions being attached. Donor nations are already attaching new strings to aid to ensure that it is used effectively. They are rightly increasingly reluctant to provide aid to nations that flout human rights, that have relatively large military budgets, and where there is major mismanagement of economies.

I hope that donor nations will be similarly reluctant to provide aid unless they can be assured that it will be used properly to address the problems that it is intended to address rather than being used elsewhere.

The general consensus would appear to be that, unless some billions of dollars of new aid are offered, the developing world will be unlikely to co-operate in formulating measures to address global environmental problems. That is one of the key issues that will have to be thrashed out in the agreement. We must realise that the underdeveloped world expects some of that new money —not all—to be found, and will not co-operate unless it is, but I think it realistic of the Government to make it absolutely clear that we cannot sign treaties whereby the recipients supply the amount of money that they think they should receive with no veto being exercisable by the nations that have to provide the funds. The commitment cannot be open ended. I do not believe that any Government of any political colour could possibly agree to such an arrangement.

Considerations of time preclude me from outlining further the problems of deforestation, the way in which barriers to trade influence the environment, the demands by the have-nots for greater technological transfer or the sovereignty rights of each nation to set out its own environmental priorities. The Prime Minister has made it clear above all else that he is massively concerned that Rio 92 should produce agreements—agreements that will not only be welcomed but will set out to save many aspects of the Earth for generations still unborn.

8.27 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): We are all in favour of saving the environment in general. The problem is whether we are in favour of saving the environment in specific cases and of making specific decisions. The fate of the world depends not on the general statements that we make but on specific actions that we take in specific cases.

Last Sunday my family and I walked up the River Itchen valley in Hampshire. It was a gloriously hot and sunny day, a perfect day on which to walk through the water meadows—many acres of land designated as a site of special scientific interest—by one of Hampshire's chalk streams. I walked up on to the downland, and looked back over the River Itchen valley, a heat haze rising above it. In the far distance, I could see the most prominent buildings in my constituency. It was absolutely beautiful.

Why was I standing on the top of Twyford down that day? If the Government have their way, there will soon be a six-lane motorway in a huge chalk cutting 100 ft below where I stood and the excavated chalk will be dumped across the SSSI. The waterway will be ruined and my family and I will never have the chance to go there again. That road is to be built in defiance of European law to which the Government have signed up. General statements about the environment are fine but, if that is the way in which the Government treat laws that they have already signed, one can only worry about the seriousness with which they will treat any treaties that they sign in Rio. I hope that I am wrong, but the signs are not good.

A number of hon. Members have mentioned the importance of trade to developing countries. In his opening speech, the Secretary of State said that trade would be much discussed in Rio. I want to know what the Government will be saying in those discussions about global trade. Hon. Members on both sides of the House are right to say that, in terms of its scale, of the resources involved and of the money that it can bring to most developing countries, trade is more important than aid.

Over the past 10 years many countries have been forced or encouraged by the International Monetary Fund and the World bank to develop more open, more market-oriented and more liberal trading policies and to divert their own domestic resources from domestic production to export production. If we place such emphasis on trade for the developing world, we must ask whether that trade is being carried out in a way that is contributing to sustainable development or whether it is actually undermining sustainable development.

I do not believe that that question has been properly addressed in the UNCED process or in the current GATT talks. The trading system that is evolving is not promoting sustainable development. Instead, it threatens to undermine it in several key ways. One of the most fundamental underpinnings of sustainable development is that the full costs of producing goods and trading them, including the environmental costs and the so-called externalities, is taken fully into account in the price of those goods. The current philosophy in GATT, which is sadly reflected in the UNCED principles which have been published, rules that out.

The GATT philosophy states explicitly that the environmental conditions under which a product is produced must not influence how it is traded in the world market. Put simply, if country A is a rich country with clean environmental laws and country B is a poor country with weak environmental laws, a product produced at a much lower cost in country B must be freely traded in country A. That will lead to a shift in production from countries with high ecological standards of production to countries with weak ecological standards of production. That position will be exploited within the trading system.

Very often it will not be a matter of separate companies operating in different countries. Instead there will be subsidiaries of the same trans-national companies, or companies controlled by licensing arrangements with trans-national companies, exploiting the fact that they can move production to the areas where it is cheapest to pollute and where there are the lowest safety standards.

If hon. Members doubt that prediction, they need only consider the ecological devastation in the border zone of Mexico where many American trans-national companies have located over the past 15 years to exploit the low environmental standards there. Those low environmental standards are now inevitably poisoning people in the United States. We should learn a lesson from that.

Under the new trading system there will be pressure to lower our own environmental standards. Our communities and trade unions will be told by managements that other countries are producing to lower standards and we should not put pressure on for such high pollution and health and safety standards in this country if we want to compete in the global market.

In case hon. Members think that this is scaremongering, a recent document on trade and the environment produced by GATT states:

> "It is possible that trade liberalisation could worsen particular environmental problems in the absence of appropriate domestic environmental policies. Conceivably, an expansion of trade could produce negative environmental effects so large that they outweigh the conventional benefits from open markets . . . resulting in an overall decline in national welfare."

That point is made by GATT, not by one of the environmental non-governmental organisations. GATT recognises the dangers. The GATT report continues:

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"This is only possible if a country lacks a domestic environmental policy that reflects its environmental values and priorities."

The problem is that there is no institution in the world trading system or in the multilateral system, like the Bretton Woods system, which is charged with the responsibility for enabling developing countries to develop appropriate environmental values and policies. Nor is there an institution charged specifically with the responsibility of ensuring that developing countries have sufficient resources to put those domestic policies into practice. So long as no global institution exists with that role, the trading system will operate in the way that I have predicted.

The international trading system also represents a danger to the environment in respect of current international pressures to harmonise standards. Companies and countries are beginning to argue that northern countries which want eco-labelling of products so that consumers know what they are buying and how it was produced are providing an unfair technical barrier to trade for developing countries that would like to sell in our markets. Consumers may not be able to have full knowledge about what they are buying because GATT holds that up as a technical barrier to trade.

Trans-national companies are arguing that a high standard in respect of the level of pesticide residues in our food is another barrier to trade. They argue that we should harmonise downwards to the standards of the Codex Alimentaire. Those practices are not in place yet, but that is the way in which the trading system is evolving. They are real dangers.

None of us yet knows whether international treaties like CITES—the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species—which include trade provisions, will still be held to be legal under the terms of the Uruguay round—if that is completed. There has yet to be an explicit statement about that.

I recognise that the issue is complex. I do not side with those who want to take advantage of eco-protectionism. There is a grave danger of countries like the United States of America using environmental arguments simply to exclude competitive exports from third-world countries. I have no illusions that we will change the policies of third-world countries by refusing to import their goods. We need a balance. We must construct a trading system which is not obsessively free market but which is none the less open, equitable and committed to sustainable development.

In the debates on trade that must take place in Rio, I hope that the Government will press for the following. There should be an unequivocal statement that environmental protection and sustainable development are superior objectives to the promotion of trade itself. Let us have increased trade, but only where it promotes sustainable development. Let us not make it an objective in its own right. That is the role that GATT has played for the past 40 years: it has considered it an end and not a means.

There must be an unambiguous statement from Rio, from UNCED, that international treaties which include a trade element like CITES, the Basle convention and the Montreal protocol will be superior to the Uruguay round provisions on trade where there is a conflict.

There should be a call to entrench the precautionary principle and the "polluter pays" principle in the GATT discussions. We must also ensure that international standards, for example, on pesticide residues in foods become a floor and not a ceiling for the standards that we want. We must try to evolve a system under which a country with low environmental standards can be accused of using that as an unfair subsidy just as the other unfair subsidies in trade are identified and tackled. We must recognise that it will be more difficult for developing countries to meet those standards. We must therefore ensure that they receive technical and financial assistance.

In particular, I would like to see an institutional arrangement developed that could assist developing countries, and identify their needs and arbitrate where trade policies conflict with environmental policies. There is currently a choice between a new institution and incorporating that concept clearly within the proposed Multilateral Trading Organisation. However, that function must exist somewhere in the international system because it does not exist at the moment.

The Government should press for the adoption of a clear code of conduct for trans-national companies which would prevent them from shifting production to the dirtiest countries in the world and selling their products back to the richest.

Finally, we should ensure that our policies in the north do not push developing countries into unsustainable production, for example, through quite unnecessary levels of protectionism on industrialised goods or by dumping our food surpluses on them and forcing them into other forms of production and activities which are less ecologically sustainable.

I hope that trade is a central issue in Rio. However, I hope that the Government do not go there simply with ideological free-market objectives. Instead, they should have a balance of measures to maintain an open trading system and one which genuinely contributes to sustainable development.

8.39 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): I am pleased to follow that constructive speech by the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham). His remarks on GATT could well have come from the Conservative Benches rather than from the Opposition, although I confess that I am not sure whether I follow the logic of the argument that moving corporate locations to poor areas is a bad idea, as it would help development in such areas.

The hon. Member for Itchen mentioned Twyford down, which I know for personal reasons. One of the great mysteries to me is why the present dual carriageway around Winchester has not been upgraded, rather than taking away half the hillside.

One reason for having this debate before the Earth summit began is that it would have allowed us to say what was missing from the agenda at Rio. A debate after the conference would allow us to say what had been left out. I am not sure which way we are going by having a debate during the conference. However, it is constructive for us to speak on the subject.

I welcome the Government's approach to the Rio summit and agree with the remarks made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir. P.

Emery), who said that it was important for us to get a result out of the conference, rather than leave matters inconclusive or unsettled.

The great forgotten issue at Rio is the impact of world population growth on the environment. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) made his point well when he said that the tremendous population growth—currently estimated at 97 million a year—was having a significant impact on the environment. Population growth has doubled since the war, and it is projected to double again by the middle of the 21st century unless something is done about it now.

We have to ask ourselves whether that is a problem—does population growth affect the environment? I have no doubt that it is a cause of environmental decline. We see the evidence all over the place. Population growth leads to deforestation in the third world, as people look for fuel simply to heat their houses and cook their food. Logging has been mentioned several times.

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollok): It is big business.

Mr. Ottaway: I am sorry, but I did not hear the hon. Gentleman's remark.

Logging is carried out in the third world for commercial exploitation and to earn hard currency for third world countries. As my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) pointed out, desertification is a consequence of deforestation. All over Africa, crops are failing and species are becoming extinct.

All those issues are on Agenda 21 at the summit, yet their root cause—population growth—has not been considered, and I regret that. It affects not merely the local environment but the ozone layer. China, which has the fastest growing and largest population in the world, is estimated to be pumping 17 million tonnes of sulphur a year into the environment and the ozone layer from its coal-fired power stations.

Much of the damage is caused by world poverty, because there is no alternative fuel for the domestic purposes to which I referred. Population growth is causing poverty because it is a vicious circle. If the population grows by 3 per cent., the infrastructure must also grow by 3 per cent. and 3 per cent. more schools and jobs must be provided. That would even be a challenge to a developed nation, let alone one in the undeveloped world.

If population is a problem, do we care? Should we concern ourselves about the fact that the population explosion is having so much impact? There is no doubt that there is widespread concern. That view has been expressed by both Prince Charles and the Archbishop of Canterbury, who pointed out that population growth is a cause of world poverty and of environmental decline.

I distance myself from the Archbishop of Canterbury's criticism of the Roman Catholic Church. To be fair, that Church supports family planning. The method that it advocates is outdated, and is perhaps not effective, but it supports the principle.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Even though it does not work.

Mr. Ottaway: Whether it works or not, it is a purely subjective matter—it is a matter of individual conscience. If the Roman Catholic Church were to support modern methods—I am not saying that it should do so—think of the impact that that would have on public opinion.

Economists may say that we should not be concerned about world population growth and that there is no problem. They may say that the Earth can sustain unlimited population growth, that it can feed unlimited numbers. They may ask why we should be concerned about literacy rates if they are rising. They may say that deaths caused by poverty are falling. One cannot quarrel with those arguments. However, are they right? That is not a reason to ignore population growth, as it is a problem. It devalues human life, affects the quality of life and has an impact on the environment. The sooner that population size is stabilised, the better it will be for the quality of life and for the world's environment.

In an earlier intervention, I mentioned that Indonesia is one of the great economic successes of the far east, and that the economic growth which started there in the 1960s was preceded by a crash family planning programme. Indonesia was not able to have sustained economic development until it was able to stabilise population growth.

If population growth is a problem, the question remains, what are we going to do about it? That is where I feel that the Rio summit is failing. It should be tackling that fundamental issue. It is estimated that about 300 million people are denied access to family planning. To put it mundanely, we want user-friendly family planning services for the third world to enable us to reduce fertility in those areas.

We need not become obsessed with the single issue of family planning. It has been shown that better educated women have smaller numbers of children, which means stable population levels. It all comes down to the need for more cash. I welcome the Overseas Development Administration's increase in funding for family planning programmes. I believe that it has increased by about 28 per cent. However, the amount of money being spent on population policies amounts to only 2 per cent. of the ODA budget. If it is such a fundamental issue, why are we holding back funding for something which could be so effective? The funding contributed is peanuts in terms of overall public expenditure.

Family planning and the education of women are not intellectually challenging issues, but they do more for the environment than almost anything else being debated at Rio.

8.48 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I welcome the opportunity to make some comments while the Rio summit is under way and to encourage the Government to press for some much-needed policies in an important international event of this kind. However, the Government must recognise that every member state at the conference must put its own house in order and they must ensure that each of us has a responsibility for dealing with environmental issues in our own country, rather than simply pointing the finger at the more spectacular cases of environmental destruction—especially those in the developing countries, such as the destruction of the rain forests in Latin America.

We have some serious problems in our own country, as has been mentioned, because of the damage and proposed

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damage to sites of special scientific interest. Every year, many of the sites, which are designated under a Government order, are destroyed and sometimes obliterated. The great weakness in the designation system needs to be examined very closely.

There is also a weakness in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which was supposed to introduce management systems for resources and habitats similar to those being discussed at the Rio conference. Many millions of pounds are channelled into management agreements and some of that money is compensation for decisions such as not to plant trees. Some of that money is not being used in the most effective manner. When we consider the cost of environmental protection—there is undoubtedly a cost—some of the resources used in this country could be spent in far better ways than simply paying wealthy landowners large sums of money for not destroying SSSIs.

There has been much talk of the biodiversity treaty and there is no doubt that it is vital. I was sorry to hear some negative comments from some hon. Members about the nature of the scientific evidence of the real risks that are posed by problems such as global warming and biodiversity. Wildlife Link, which represents all the major conservation bodies in this country, worked very closely with the Department of the Environment in preparation for the conference and it supported the Department's intention to sign the treaty. It is of great concern that the Government are apparently back-tracking on that intention because of the United States reluctance to sign because it believes that that may involve the commitment of money or affect organisations such as the drug companies.

The wealthy northern states have a responsibility to channel resources to the developing world. The drug companies will be affected by some of the clauses in the treaty that cover discoveries from plants, mosses and other organisms found in the rain forest which can be used to develop important drugs. The countries in which those species are found are, not unreasonably, asking for a share of the development to help them to protect the forests. Why should not they have a share? Of course, there must be a proper, hammered-out agreement to determine how much money will be spent, where it will go and who will pay. I agree that those matters must be resolved. However, as a general principle, if multinational companies are making profits from developments that originated in developing countries, and particularly in their forests, there is nothing unreasonable in the companies paying a levy on the drugs that are produced. The multinational drug companies are not exactly short of resources or profits, and it is perfectly legitimate to argue that the money is returned to the country from which it derived. That will also help in the protection of the rain forests.

At the moment, when there is pressure on forests, either through a need for farmland or if the people living there think that quick profits can be made by chopping down the wood for logging, the forests will disappear and that process will be encouraged. If it can be shown that forests can be managed in a sustainable way to produce items such as wood, rubber and drugs of the kind to which I referred much more emphasis will be placed on protecting them.

Population control has also been mentioned in the debate. It is an important issue which will have to be discussed at the Rio conference. Population, poverty and environmental destruction are connected. We do not want to approach the problem in a patronising manner and insist that developing countries control the growth in population, and we should not pretend that this issue does not affect the developed north. That is not the way to approach the problem. Some of the reasons for over-population are poverty, infant mortality and the fact that many families have many children because the children are needed to ensure that the parents are provided for in old age in countries where there is no social security system and because many of the children will die during their upbringing.

We need to tackle those issues, but it is fair to say that much more could be done towards population control. Mention has been made of the Catholic Church's attitude, and I think that Dr. Carey was right in his criticims of that attitude. However, the Catholic Church has played an important and progressive role in combating poverty and in the work that it does in developing countries. I admire the Catholic Church for what it has done, but it could do so much more if it could shake off the shackles of outdated theological dogma. In fact, that dogma is on shaky theological grounds. Although it is not for me to argue the Catholic Church's position, there are progressive elements within the church who feel that the time has come to review its position on population control. Because of its proud record in combating poverty and promoting overseas development, the church could set a tremendous example and be a force for good in many ways.

We need to play our role. Hon. Members have referred to the talks on the general agreement on tariffs and trade and to CITES, and those agreements must be enforced. One of the problems for the developing world is that much of the environmental destruction has taken place with the encouragement and the collusion of northern-based multinational companies. We, as individual consumers, are also to blame. For example, our taste for large tropical prawns has led to the destruction of much of the coastal forest and mangrove swamps in many Asian countries in order to satisfy wealthy northern consumers. Individuals, as well as Governments, have a responsibility, because we demand goods which are produced in an environmentally destructive way.

Many people are not aware of the way in which food is produced and in which timber is produced and harvested. Ecological labelling on products would be a great help. The banning of the importation of hardwoods which are felled in an unsustainable fashion at the behest of all European countries would also be a great help. Enforcement of the CITES regulations would also have an effect.

One of the current problems which is being widely debated in the European Community is the importation of wild birds. That is an example of what can go wrong when there is uncontrolled exploitation of a natural resource. Importing birds caught in the wild is not only cruel but involves the destruction of forests in order to collect such rare species as wild parrots from their nests. The easiest way to collect them as nestlings is to chop down a tree and remove them from their nest in the trunk. That is being done to satisfy demand in the wealthy northern countries of Europe.

We need to bring this trade under control by means of a total ban on the importing of these species. We should then allow a controlled, sustainable trade in species which have been brought in by our aviarists to improve breeding stock. This is a good example of how the Government, through the European Community, can take action to deal with a trade that is both uncontrolled and damaging.

Following criticism, the World bank has reformed itself to a large degree—but it could do a great deal more. It has been responsible for funding a large number of development projects that have damaged the environment and been of doubtful economic value to the countries concerned.

I hope that the Ministers who attend Rio will not be too influenced by the United States. The attitude that the United States has adopted to controlling carbon emissions and to the biodiversity treaty has been very depressing —as has the fact that it has been influenced by American drug companies and multinationals. The attitude that President Bush has adopted seems tailored more to short-term political gain for himself than to the long-term interests of his country, our country and the whole world.

The symbol of the earth conference is a hand holding the globe. The summit is certainly one of the most important milestones in the history of the world, designed as it is not to stop immediately—the situation is far too grim for that—but to start to tackle the continual destruction of much of our planet and many of our rain forests. It will tackle the problems of pollution and of pressure on our natural resources and the way in which they have been squandered for far too long for far too little gain. I hope that the logo of the summit will not come to symbolise an opportunity slipping through the fingers of the conference because delegates to it were motivated not by the interests of the future generations of young people who will inherit the consequences of these decisions but by self-interest.

We must not lose this chance; we must ensure that the treaties are signed and that we begin a process of sustainable development, of harmony and of mutual support between the rich north and the poor south.

9 pm

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): As the clock strikes nine, I come to the House with a message from the city of Chester. It is a message that I had not expected to be able to bring, because I did not receive it until about two and a half hours ago, when I found myself on the telephone speaking to one of my constituents. She was surprised to find that I could speak on the telephone, because yesterday I had assured her that I would not be able to because I had packed my pyjamas, sponge bag and toothbrush in preparation for a long night in Maastricht.

Instead, I find myself having a short evening in Rio. My constituent was delighted when I told her that, finding the fact that the House had turned from the issue of Europe to that of the future of the world encouraging. She said, "You have got your priorities right. Instead of continuing to contemplate your Euro-navel, you are actually coming face to face with the life-or-death issue of the future of the planet."

This was a reminder to me of how passionately people feel about the environment, and of how important they see the summit. I refer particularly to the 20 per cent. of my constituents who, like 20 per cent. of the population in general, are under the age of 18 and do not vote. In conversation with them, the issue that emerges first and foremost is that of the future of our planet.

It heartens me that, in Chester, at least 11 groups are actively involved in the cause of the environment. One of them is a group called RESULTS, and it was a member of that group to whom I spoke on the phone. Its members have urged me to bring a message to the House—that we must welcome the Rio declaration and sign up to the two key conventions, on climate change and on biodiversity.

This country has taken the lead and shown the way in these matters, and environmental groups such as those in my constituency urge us not to lose our nerve. Of course it is unrealistic to sign a blank cheque; we must not allow the issue to exacerbate the so-called north-south divide. None the less, we must go the extra mile: we must give the environment the benefit of the doubt. These conventions, whether modified or allowed to stand, are important markers on the way to a more careful, more caring and more sharing planet.

My constituents urge us not to let our excellent Secretary of State for the Environment or our admirable Prime Minister merely go to Rio to say the right things. They ask us to get them to do the right things and urge them to sign even a weakened convention, because it could lead to a stronger one.

The Rio summit is an enormous enterprise on a quite colossal and ambitious scale. Some 12,000 delegates have made their way there and it is alarming to think of the amount of fuel that has been consumed. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) spoke about paperwork. He called it bumf—a Scottish expression with which I am not familiar. However, we know what he means. Whole forests have been used to produce paper for what the hon. and learned Gentleman called "this jamboree". But the summit must be more than that. It is a world gathering to discuss critical issues, and my constituents know that even if some hon. Members do not.

One of my constituents told me that he witnessed the number of hon. Members in the Chamber for the Prime Minister's statement on Europe and asked me to report on how many would be present for this important debate on the future of our planet. I shall not report the figure in full, because it might slightly dishearten my constituents. They wish the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Prime Minister well in Rio but urge us not to leave it just to them. They want hon. Members to play a part as well.

Hon. Members spoke about the World Wide Fund for Nature and its pledge for the tree of life. Some hon. Members have signed that pledge and we hope that our pledges will hang on a tree in Rio not as an empty gesture but because we want to contribute. Some people have said that they will attempt to use 10 per cent. less oil, gas or electricity and some assured me yesterday that they were pledging to use 10 per cent. less petrol by curtailing the use of their cars. That will be a challenge for some hon. Members, because with our mileage allowance it will be possible to compare last year's consumption with this year's. Perhaps it will be a real sacrifice.

The concept of Rio is not remote. It is not a warm feeling or an opportunity to make the right kind of noises about the environment. It is an opportunity to make a difference and my constituents have challenged us to play our part by conserving energy, by recycling and by remembering that small actions count and can make a

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difference. In William Blake's famous dictum, he who would do good must do it by minute particulars. We urge those in Rio to take major steps and I hope that the rest of us will make minute but important contributions.

9.7 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I am glad that at last we are having a debate on the Earth summit, even though it was unplanned. We have heard many interesting speeches but unfortunately three or four Conservative Members have shown the Government in a poor light. I refer especially to the hon. Members for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) and for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) and the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn). There is a strong consensus that the Government should go to Rio with a positive attitude and should try to bring about some improvement in the global environment.

It has taken a long time to prepare for the Rio summit. I have followed these affairs for the past 20 years from the time of the Stockholm summit. In the 1970s after the OPEC oil price rise there was much talk about a new economic order. There were many meetings of UNCTAD, the UN conference on trade and development, and we had the Brandt report and later the Brundtland report. The only major agreement that has been signed in those 20 years was the Montreal protocol on the protection of the ozone layer. That was a tremendous step and led to international agreement on phasing out CFCs. That has not been done as quickly as perhaps it should have been, given the 20 per cent diminution in the winter concentrations of ozone. The problem is so serious that perhaps we should have a much more rapid phase-out of CFCs.

An enormous amount of groundwork has been done in preparation for the summit, starting with the global warming convention. Some Conservative Members, particularly the hon. Member for Billericay, questioned the scientific evidence on this, but there is an overwhelming consensus that we are faced with a serious, long-term threat of global warming and climatic change resulting from the combustion of fossil fuels and the burning of the rain forests. Carbon dioxide concentrations are increasing and the consensus view of the world's leading scientists is that global temperatures will increase by between 0·5 and 3 deg C by 2030 and perhaps by as much as 5 deg C over the next 100 years. We must take steps to prevent that happening, and that means that we must first stabilise and then reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

The target of stabilising carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000 looks ambitious, but the ways in which we can achieve that make good sense. It could be achieved mainly through energy efficiency and proper insulating of houses, factories and places of work, and by district heating schemes to use waste from power stations and new sources of energy. All those energy efficiency measures make excellent economic sense as well, because they enable us to produce more efficiently and therefore cheaply. It disappoints me that successive Governments in the past 15 or 20 years have not taken the importance of insulation seriously enough.

It is sad, in these latter days of preparation for the convention on global warming, to see Britain dragging its feet because the United States is reluctant to accept it. We have fallen out of line with the rest of the European Community. Germany, Denmark, Holland, France and Italy have been in the forefront of putting the environment on the global political agenda. If Britain were working constructively with them, the European Community would be the leading force for change. We would pull Japan and Canada with us and isolate the United States, shaming it into action on these fronts.

It is a symbol of that problem that the European environment Commissioner, Ripa di Meana, has decided, largely because of Britain's attitude and the lack of consensus in the Community, not to go to Rio. The one person in Europe, perhaps in the world, who has done most to improve the global environment will not be at the Rio summit.

Many hon. Members have spoken about the convention on biodiversity. Tropical rain forests are a precious resource which is being destroyed at the prolific rate of an area the size of Britain every year. Many species are under threat of extinction. About one half of the world's species could be destroyed in the next 50 years if this carries on unchecked. Global warming is an important factor, but so, too, are the precious resources that will be lost. They provide drugs and medicines that we shall desperately need in the future.

I accept that the financial implications of the convention on biodiversity cannot be implemented. We cannot sign huge blank cheques to reach agreement. However, I hope that the noises that we have heard over the past week or 10 days are aimed simply at lowering our expectations and that, by the end of the two weeks of the summit, agreement will be reached. We must not allow further destruction of the rain forests.

A likely and important step forward at Rio will be the setting up of the commission for sustainable development. The House will be aware that part of the Brundtland report is devoted to sustainable development. Every country will be required to produce a full national plan.

Britain's population is static and our land use and food production seem to present no problems. Indeed, we are producing too much rather than too little. There are serious problems, however, with pollution, use of resources and carbon dioxide emissions, and these must be tackled. The framing of national plans will pose major challenges.

Agenda 21 refers to ways of relieving the problems of the third world, such as poverty, ill-health, inadequate water supply and malnutrition. I am disappointed that it contains nothing about population. Two Conservative Members have made major contributions to the major problems that are associated with population growth. We do not, however, tackle the problems simply by providing family planning or contraception on a large scale. The solution is much more complicated than that. We must tackle the problems of infant mortality, poverty, inadequate water supply and primary health care, and that requires finance.

The United Nations estimate of the financial commitment that will stem from the Rio summit is $125 billion. That sounds an enormous figure until we consider the world's gross domestic product. In that context, $125 billion is about 0·3 or 0·4 per cent. of the GDP of the advanced countries. In other words, there needs to be a commitment of about one third of 1 per cent., and that fits quite neatly into the aid budget. We have been asked for

decades to aim for the target of 0·7 per cent. of our wealth for overseas development, but Britain's contribution has fallen from 0·5 per cent. to 0·27 per cent. That is a sad commentary on the past 12 years of Conservative government.

The changes that have taken place in Russia and eastern Europe generally mean that the cold war is at an end. For the next five, 10 or 20 years we can look forward to deep cuts in defence expenditure. That is the peace dividend. I have no doubt that the primary call on resources that are now being set free following the changes in east-west relations will be the tackling of the north-south problem. The resources should be used to improving and developing the global environment.

9.19 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): We have had a good debate in which several hon. Members on both sides of the House have made extremely significant contributions which the Government would do well to heed. Over the past few weeks many people have written to me asking if and when we shall have a debate on issues of major importance that are to be discussed at UNCED. It is ironic that, at the eleventh hour and after considerable Opposition pressure, only because the Government found themselves with nothing to debate today did they rush through, as a stop gap, a debate on the Earth summit.

Whatever the outcome of the summit, the issues that it will consider have been widely explored in the press and on television, and that has raised the level of consciousness in Britain. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) emphasised the importance of television in bringing home to the public the challenges that confront us in tackling the global environment.

Today, the Secretary of State for the Environment reiterated the Prime Minister's remark that UNCED is the start of the process. We have news for the Government. The process began decades ago. Others understood it well before the Stockholm conference of 20 years ago, when Norway's Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, said:

"The environment is where we live, and development is what we do in that abode. The two are inseparable."

We are in the third decade of a series of environmental and development conferences.

Today, we were lobbied by the University of London Union, whose letter to me is typical of many that I received over the past few weeks:

"We are particularly disappointed at the way in which development issues have not been given priority on the UNCED agenda. We believe that unless the root causes of underdevelopment and poverty are tackled, development in many countries will never be possible, and the desperate struggle for people simply to survive will override only long-term or environmental population considerations. We feel especially strongly about the fact that millions of innocent young children die every year simply through lack of the very basic necessities of life, which in a world of plenty must be the deepest tragedy of all."

I am sure that we all share that sentiment. The letter adds:

"We had been hoping that UNCED would result in real changes to put an end to such injustice—and in our optimism, we hope that can still happen. We believe that Britain is in a particularly unique position to take the lead in putting forward such proposals and to influence other nations to do likewise . . . We feel that such an important event as UNCED should be more fully discussed and debated in Parliament."

We have felt that for a long time, and we are grateful that the Government, even at the eleventh hour, have chosen to debate the subject.

Last year, an interesting report was published by the Global Environment Research Centre in conjunction with the United Nations Association. "Institutions and Sustainable Development: Meeting the Challenge" examines what was done by various Government Departments to prepare for the Rio summit. It concluded:

"Analysis of developments in Whitehall shows lack of effective overall co-ordination. Environmental considerations are still largely peripheral rather than central to policy making in most Departments of State—not least in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, whose failure to take seriously the long-term threat to national security from global environmental degradation has far broader implications."

The report considered all Government Departments in detail, to establish the extent of their preparations for the Earth summit, and concluded that they amounted to a hotch-potch, and that the task had not been tackled in a systematic or comprehensive way.

Mr. Whitney: Will the hon. Lady expand a little on what she considers to be a long-term threat to what she has described as global environmental degradation?

Mrs. Clwyd: I shall be pleased to do so later in my speech.

Let us look at the Government's record. Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition asked the Prime Minister whether he agreed that widespread poverty in the third world was a major cause of damage to the world's environment, and what new action he proposed in Rio to combat that poverty more effectively. The Prime Minister replied:

"We . . . have dramatically increased in real terms the amount of aid".—[*Official Report*, 2 June 1992; Vol. 208, c. 703.]

That simply is not true. In 1990, Britain spent a mere 0·27 per cent. of gross national product on aid—the lowest figure on record, as the Minister for Overseas Development admitted in the House last year.

On that occasion, the Minister was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours):

"Is it not true that last year, as a proportion of GDP, Britain spent less than it has ever done since the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development began keeping records?"

The Minister replied:

"The answer is yes. I do not like it any more than anybody else does".—[*Official Report*, 14 October 1991; Vol. 196, c. 18.]

The truth is that the Government have cut by half the amount and value of official development aid to the third world since they came to power in 1979. When we left office in that year, aid stood at 0·51 per cent. of GNP and was rising. That cut in aid has deprived the poor of Africa, Asia and Latin America of more than £10 billion.

I believe that those figures are the best indicator of the importance that a political party or country attaches to overseas development. Given the current claimed rate of growth in aid, it could take the British Government more than 95 years to reach the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP. Are we prepared to stand back and let another 1,387 billion children die in the meantime?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Lady is addressing the point at great length and in highly emotive terms, as she always does. Of course this is a serious point, but such observations would come much better from the hon. Lady and her right hon. and hon. Friends if only two months ago, at the time of the general election, they had been

[Mr. Howard]

prepared to include a commitment to increasing aid in one of the two categories of spending to which they were prepared to commit themselves immediately. I hope that the hon. Lady will now confirm that Labour was prepared to increase aid spending only as and when resources allowed it—and we all know that resources would never have allowed it.

Mrs. Clwyd: There is a major difference between the attitudes of Conservative and Labour Members. We said that our aim was to reach the target of 0·7 per cent.of GNP within five years. Only two weeks ago, in the European Community, the British Government refused to reach that target by the year 2000, and blocked other EC countries that wanted to make that commitment. I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman has any right to challenge our commitment when his party clearly has no commitment of any kind to reach that 0·7 per cent. target.

The Government have cut not only the overall aid budget but the percentage of assistance that they give to various United Nations organisations. It is shameful that, when the whole world is talking about the Earth summit and the gap between the rich and the poor on our planet, the British Prime Minister should go to the Dispatch Box and get his figures wrong. Is he trying to dupe people into believing that the British Government really care about the needs of the third world? If the agreements reached at UNCED are to be fully implemented, the United Nations has a critical role to play.

While the Government have continued to pay lip service to the role of the United Nations, they have savaged Britain's support to some of the key United Nations agencies since 1979. They have cut their support for the United Nations children's fund by 44 per cent. in real terms. No one can doubt the effectiveness of an organisation such as UNICEF in the third world. The British Government have cut their support for the United Nations Fund for Population Activities by 65 per cent. It is a bit rich when I hear Conservative Members talk about the importance of population activities in the third world if at the same time they are prepared to sit back and allow the Government to cut their support for that very important fund. The Government have also cut their support for the United Nations Development Fund by 57 per cent.

In the three years that I have been speaking on this brief I have seen for myself the effects on people in Asia, Africa and South America of living in the hopelessness and the grind of daily poverty. In Cambodia, still one of the poorest countries in the world, one finds, more than a decade after Pol Pot, that it is still denied the kind of development aid that it should be receiving from Britain and the United States. When I saw Cambodia's health Minister just two weeks ago and he thanked me for the pressure that I was putting on the Government to increase aid to Cambodia, I thought about what might have happened had we been in government. We should have ensured that one of the poorest countries in the world got the aid to which it was entitled.

I have seen for myself in Ethiopia queues of women waiting to get contraceptive advice through the United Nations Development Programme and through the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. I know that in Ethiopia the UNDP and the UNFPA simply do not have the money to do the job. In Iraq I have heard the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees bewail the fact that there are things that they would like to do in northern Iraq to alleviate the plight of the still suffering Kurds. I know that the UNHCR has been told again that money is not available and that in desperation the UNHCR has said, "Give us the money and we can do the job." If Conservative Members are serious about wanting to help the third world, they must give money so that the organisations working there are able to do the job.

Another myth that the Government have sought to spread concerns their record on debt reduction. In 1990 Britain took more money in dept repayments from third world countries than it gave in aid, a fact to which my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) referred. In more than 40 nations termed by the World bank as severely indebted, debt payments have swallowed up over a third of all their trade earnings in recent years. The Government have made a lot of noise about their proposals for debt reduction—the Trinidad terms. However, it is worth bearing in mind that, even if the initiative had been implemented fully in line with the original proposal, it would have resulted only in 1 per cent. of the total third world debt being written off. Even that very limited proposal has not been fully implemented. What about the other 99 per cent.? Perhaps the Minister can tell the House which countries have benefited from the Trinidad terms and the corresponding amounts of debt which have been written off.

The Government have refused to take any steps to encourage the cancellation of debts owed by poor countries to the commercial banks. They have blocked proposals for reducing debt owed to the European Community. They have refused to take action to reduce debt owed by the poorest countries to other multilateral agencies. And what of trade? My hon. Friend the Member for Itchen asked many questions about trade. One might have expected that a Government who are concerned, as they profess, about the environment and development, in a country which has many historic and continuing links with the Commonwealth, would have been more vigorous in examining the impact of the Single European Act and the current general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations on the poorer countries. It is also worth bearing in mind the issue of aid tied to the purchase of British goods. Why is it that, again, the United Kingdom has the highest percentage of tied aid among members of the development assistance committee of the OECD?

The political tensions at UNCED are not difficult to understand. The poor countries are telling the rich countries that they want action on their pressing environmental priorities. For the Brazilians living in the shanty towns around Rio and for the African peasant farmer, the top environmental issues are dirty drinking water and poor sanitation which kill their children by the thousand. Three million children are said to die every year from diarrhoea caused by drinking dirty water. Another important issue is the daily search for the shrinking supplies of fuel wood that they use to cook their daily food. The World Health Organisation reported recently that 2·5 billion people suffer illnesses resulting from insufficient or contaminated water. Those are the life and death environmental issues that threaten poor countries today. Poverty is a cause of environmental degradation. Meanwhile, the Governments of richer countries, including our own——

Mr. Whitney *rose*——

Mrs. Clwyd: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman and time is short.

Governments have tried to shift attention to the issues of climate change, population, forestry and, until recently, biodiversity. The original climate change convention has been considerably weakened because of the role of the United States and the United Kingdom. Over the past 130 years or more the impacts of industrial development have accelerated and accumulated to the point where the climatic stability of the biosphere is being affected, raising serious questions about the future well-being of our planet. The sources of that pollution have overwhelmed the sink capacity of the planet.

The United States has singlehandedly provided 33 per cent. of accumulated industrial carbon dioxide pollution. To salvage its conscience, it is now prepared to spend a large sum of money on forestry projects in poorer countries, which will act as a further sink for its carbon dioxide emissions. Thanks to the United States and United Kingdom Governments, the climate convention to be discussed at Rio makes no commitment to reducing emissions of global warming gases. The United Kingdom Government have, in effect, been instrumental in facilitating what amounts to polluter sovereignty on behalf of richer countries. In other words, it is business as usual; carry on polluting.

The Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) talked about the importance of ever-increasing population levels, particularly in the south. We accept that it is important to look at population growth, but it needs to be looked at in conjunction with other key issues affecting the environment and development, including consumption levels.

According to a report on development and environment prepared for Rio by the World bank, women hold the key to prosperity because they control their fertility and the fertility of the soil. According to a multi-country study a secondary education reduces from seven to three the number of children a woman has. It concluded that educating women was the biggest solution to poverty and environmental destruction. That point was well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr Morley).

The Earth summit has been greeted with deep pessimism by the contemptuous words of President Bush —the President who boasted during his election campaign that he would be the "environment president". We now have the grudging words of our own Prime Minister. He is warning us that expectations must not be set too high. For President Bush to pull out of the biodiversity convention, after it had been broadly agreed, on the eve of the Rio summit, and for the United Kingdom, which had apparently taken the lead in urging the convention and been admired for doing so, to wax hot and then cold, yet again apeing the President of the United States, is unbelievable but not unexpected. After all, President Bush has provided a veil for those who want to dodge their own responsibilities.

We must face the fact that the summit cannot merely tackle the symptoms of environmental damage but must deal with the causes. Delegates are grappling not merely with plans to clean up the world but with reaching agreement on a pattern of economic development that will avoid fresh damage in the future. The Earth summit must start us on the road to curing the disease of unsustainable development and global poverty and not indulge in attempts to administer sticking plasters to the world's festering environmental wounds. Forced to live hand to mouth, the poor have no choice but to chop down their trees or to overfarm soils merely to survive. It should now be absolutely clear that we must deal with the economic root causes—and the gulf between the rich and poor nations is one such cause.

I am reminded of our priorities by an interesting supplement. For example, in the United Kingdom the Government spent £55·2 million on military bands in one year. In the developing world, that could pay for 500 trucks and spares to be bought and shipped to Africa, survival kits for 1·1 million Cambodian families with pots, pans, sheeting, mats and food. There is a long list of other priorities which have been chosen by the Government, priorities that I suggest we reconsider.

I shall go to Rio on Friday on behalf of my party and I shall follow the issues with great interest. I shall follow especially the way in which in the global forum the Prime Minister decides his and his Government's priorities. Unless we act, and act conclusively, at Rio, the outcome in the long term will be disaster for us all. The reality is that, whether we live in the poor south or in the rich north, we all share the same planet. Whether it is global warming or the destruction of the rain forests, whether it is disasters such as AIDS which know no boundaries, or whether it is terrorism or religious fanaticism, the truth is that we are all linked together and there is no way we can or should escape those challenges.

9.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): We have had a most interesting and fairly full debate, and I am glad to have the opportunity to wind up. There is a delicious irony in the fact that the hon. Members for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) who opened and closed the debate for the Opposition respectively are bitterly opposed to their party's policy on the European Community. It is a delicious irony that the Danish decision has given rise to this debate.

I am glad that we have been able to listen to interesting contributions on this important subject from hon. Members of all parties. The issue is of the gravest importance to us all. It is of the greatest concern to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, as it was to his predecessor, who played such an important part in the late 1980s, and to the Government, who supported the formation of United Nations conference on environment and development. It is my responsibility to comment on the contributions that have been made today. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, who opened the debate, gave way many times, but I hope that hon. Members will understand that I will probably not be able to do so, although I have always done so in the past.

UNCED is part of a continuing process. It is in no sense the end of a process or a race. It is probably the most important conference on the environment so far. It follows the Stockholm conference of 20 years ago. In December 1989 the United Nations General Assembly decided to hold this conference to review progress since the

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Stockholm gathering, but the Earth summit is not merely a follow on—it is part of a process that will continue after the meeting in Rio.

That observation makes me very depressed about the contributions from the hon. Members for Dagenham and for Cynon Valley, because they have prejudged the outcome of UNCED before it has properly started. It has been going for only one day. The hon. Member for Dagenham told us about the "failure" of Rio, and the hon. Member for Cynon Valley gave us a disparaging description of President Bush's remarks. The hon. Member for Dagenham quoted W. H. Auden and told us that death was on the agenda.

I find it depressing, too, that neither of the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen showed any recognition of the need for co-ordinated action. They talked about some sort of reactionary collusion between the United States and the United Kingdom, but they did not recognise that for progress to be made there has to be co-ordinated action, and compromises, which do not please all the purists, have to be made. Compromises are an essential part of progress, as we know from all the other matters in life.

My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), in a well-placed intervention, asked the hon. Member for Dagenham whether he would have handed over control of funding to the recipient countries. He failed to obtain a proper answer to that question. Instead, the hon. Gentleman comforted himself with some notion that the contribution that we should have to pay under the convention—which we have not yet signed, but which, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said, we hope that we shall be able to sign after further discussion and negotiation—would be smaller than what I presume he meant would be the contribution to the cohesion fund under the Maastricht agreement. The hon. Gentleman should read the text. He is a lawyer, and he should see what the maximalist interpretation of the text in article 21 could amount to. I do not imagine that he has read the text, and that is why he can say such things.

The hon. Member for Dagenham spoke with some pride of his belief in the politics of intervention. He completely overlooked a fact to which I am glad that attention was drawn by some of my hon. Friends—how disastrous intervention has been for the environment in some parts of the world, such as the Soviet Union. The Aral sea and the Caspian sea have been polluted by Governments whose misguided intervention has failed to protect the environment.

I shall now deal with an aspect that was mentioned by the hon. Members for Dagenham and Cynon Valley, by the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham), and by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), who made it clear that the conference is not, as the debate should not be, about aid and debt. We recognise that aid and debt have an important part to play, but they are not the central issues of the conference.

Mrs. Clwyd: They are.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Let me make my point. I was talking about debt. The Overseas Development Administration has relieved the poorest countries of £1 billion in old aid debt—hon. Members should note that figure. Twenty countries have benefited from the Toronto terms, which resulted from a United Kingdom initiative to reduce the official debts of the poorest countries. In 1990 the Prime Minister, who was then the Chancellor of the Exchequer, launched the Trinidad terms, involving a proposal to write off two thirds of the oldest stock of bilaterial debt of the poorest, most heavily indebted countries. In 1991 the Paris club began to implement those terms. *[Interruption.]* I was asked a question about this, and I shall answer it. Five countries—Benin, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Tanzania and Equatorial Guinea—have benefited so far. More are in the pipeline. More important is the fact that the United Kingdom continues to press for full implementation of the Trinidad terms.

The latest OECD figures, for 1990, show that the net flow of all forms of resources towards developing countries amounts to £26 billion—*[Interruption.]* I am coming to the other figure. The United Nations debt figures appear to show that developing countries are paying more than they receive. I am sure that hon. Members have heard this before, but it has to be repeated every time because they will not accept it. The reason is an accounting convention which shows that debt foregiveness is to be incorporated as a payment. *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may laugh and we can all laugh at accounting terms. We all know that accounting terms are sometimes laughable. The fact is that when one writes off debt, it is considered to be a debt payment. That is how accountants do it and that is why the figures look as they do. The important point is that, in reality, developing countries are net recipients of resources from the United Kingdom and the allegations made on the point betray a failure to understand the figures. [HON. MEMBERS: "They do not want to understand."] They do not want to understand.

Mr. Denham: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I will not give way, because I have only 11 minutes in which to comment on 11 different speeches. I cannot help that. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley went over her time.

I remind the hon. Member for Dagenham that every major piece of environmental legislation—I include the Control of Pollution Act 1974, the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990—have been introduced by a Conservative Government. Let us get away from all the nonsense that the hon. Member for Dagenham has spouted.

We have had many contributions from hon. Members of all parties. I did not agree with very much of what my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) said, but I did agree with some of it. I agree entirely that misguided intervention has destroyed the environment in many parts of the world. On occasions, many people speak of certainties on the subject when science is not so clear. I thoroughly accept her message that the wholesale acceptance of the messages of doom is utterly wrong. That point was endorsed by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney).

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) mentioned the convention. The text for the climate change convention was produced by the chairman of the negotiations, not by the United Kingdom or by the United States. The commitment to policies and measures

aimed at returning greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000 is a significant movement by the United States. It was, of course, brought about by argument and persuasion, and by hard work by the United Kingdom and the European Community because the United States had previously refused to subscribe to any references to timetables and targets. That is a substantial move forward.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I cannot give way because I must deal with another 10 contributions. If I make any comment, it will inevitably lead to further comment by hon. Members. I cannot do justice to the debate unless I am given time to do so.

A sustainable development commission needs to be considered carefully. It is a very interesting concept which might work and we are prepared to consider it. However, we must avoid more cumbersome bureaucracy which eats money.

The general aid point is always a subject in aid debates. It seems that it will also be a subject in this debate on the environment and development. Britain maintains a substantial and growing aid programme. It has the sixth largest aid programme in the world. In 1991-92, we spent £1,789 million—3 per cent. more in real terms than in the previous year. It is planned for that figure to grow in real terms to £1,975 million by 1994-95. The important point is that the quality of United Kingdom aid is high, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe commented. It is praised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development assistance committee. It is heavily focused on the poorest countries, which is an important matter.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), who is not in her place, and the hon. Member for Cynon Valley also touched on the subject of aid. It is not true that the size of the United Kingdom aid programme has halved. If anything, their view shows more clearly the bad use of lies and damn statistics. I will give the House the figures. In 1978-79, the net aid programme was £727 million. In 1991-92, it is estimated at £1,787 million.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Are those the figures?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Opposition's arithmetic is not quite the same as mine.

I am afraid that, in the time available, I cannot answer all the questions asked by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), but I want to say something about the global environmental fund. The important point here is that, in the global environmental fund, the participants' assembly will not determine the total amount of the replenishment by the donors, but, when we come to consider the biodiversity convention, the problem is that, on the most extreme interpretation of the text, the donors may not have the final say over what they contribute—unless there is clarification.

Let me make a further comment about biodiversity, which is important in the context of what we have been doing in the Overseas Development Administration programme. The Government supported the conservation of biodiversity in developing countries while the biodiversity convention was being negotiated. They have done that under the aid programme. More than 33 projects with the main aim of biodiversity conservation have been funded, at a cost of £7 million, with developing country Governments and non-governmental organisations. We are committed to do more. In addition, we are committed to providing £40 million to the global environment facility, which has the conservation of biodiversity as one of its for priority areas. I had some other interesting things that I should have liked to say to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, but I fear that I do not have the time.

We heard an interesting speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe. I very much agree with him about the importance of the role of the non-governmental organisations and UNCED. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has said that the Government will fully support their role at the summit and the Overseas Development Administration greatly values its collaboration with the NGOs in its aid projects.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred to whales. He and I have exchanged plumes on the subject on previous occasions. I am sorry that I did not hear his speech, but I am grateful to him for commenting that the Government have a good stance. I reiterate that the Government will take a very tough position at the International Whaling Commission meeting in Glasgow at the end of June.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) and my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottoway) made very interesting comments about the problem of population. We were regaled with some terrible examples by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross, who has faced questions that many people dare not face. Population control is most important—my hon. and learned Friend argues that it is more important than aid. I would point out, however, that population control can be, and is, part of our aid programme, as my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South commented. The ODA launched a new population strategy in 1991, and its aim is substantially to increase the population programme to ensure that all parents have children by choice and not by chance.

My hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) and the hon. Members for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) and for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) also made contributions. It was a very full debate.

As I have already said, much media attention has been concentrated on the development side rather than the environmental side of UNCED. It is most regrettable that UNCED is being portrayed in some quarters as a north-south issue and all about aid. There is no question that the Government are going to Rio with anything other than a very positive part to play.

The approach that we take is that the protection of the global environment is now a shared problem—a problem for rich and poor countries alike. That was recognised by all concerned in the negotiations for the convention on climate change which have been brought to a conclusion. As I said, the resulting document is not as strong as some purists would wish, but it is none the less a very important step forward.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister confirmed this afternoon, we are working hard to ensure that we will be able to sign the biodiversity convention. Some of the financial provisions, as currently drafted, would mean that the United Kingdom and other countries would not have the final say over how much they would be required to

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contribute to funding the convention. The Government are giving that problem very urgent consideration, but we want to find a solution.

Much has been said about the relationship between aid and the environment——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Banking (European Community)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

10 pm

Sir Thomas Arnold (Hazel Grove): I am grateful for this opportunity to address the House on the future of the British banking industry within the European Community. I want to remind the House of remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 21 May during our debate on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill when he dealt with the location of the European Monetary Institute and the central bank:

"The priority must be to decide on the location first of the EMI. The United Kingdom was the first to argue for the establishment in stage 2 of an institution like the EMI instead of having a central bank in stage 2. In our view, Britain therefore has undoubtedly a strong claim to be the seat of the EMI. It would be very much in the interests of the Community and the new institutions if they were based in the Community country with the leading financial centre in Europe. London is the leading player in the rapidly growing private ecu market. When the decision is taken to set up the central bank, we believe that Britain—not London alone but other centres—will be the strongest candidate."—[*Official Report*, 21 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 591-2.]

The City of London is a great national and European asset. It brings money into Europe from all over the world. The reasons why London can make that claim can be summarised as follows. London is the world's largest and thus Europe's largest foreign exchange centre. It is responsible for more than a quarter of the recorded global total.

London is the primary centre for ecu business, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said on 21 May. London has more foreign banks than any other centre. Some 526 foreign banks from 72 different countries are represented in London and 152 stock exchange members are foreign-owned.

London is a major centre for the trading and distribution of domestic and international equities. Its total equity turnover of £322 billion puts it ahead of Frankfurt, with £153 billion, and Paris, with £65 billion. More than 550 foreign companies are listed in London, and that is well above the number for any other European exchange. London's daily turnover in foreign equities exceeds that of New York or Tokyo and activity in European stocks is substantial.

London's markets in short-term domestic instruments are unsurpassed in the rest of Europe. They include inter-bank deposits, certificates of deposit and eligible bank bills and Treasury bills. London's gilt-edged market is one of the largest Government debt markets in Europe, with £125 billion outstanding. The London market is among the most liquid in Europe, with a turnover averaging £4·4 billion a day.

Management and syndication of the majority of Eurodollar and Euroyen bonds is based in London. Around three quarters of the Eurobond secondary market activity is estimated to take place in London. London has substantial non-domestic short-term instrument markets. The majority of Eurocommercial paper-issuing and trading takes place in London. It also has the largest international insurance market, the largest gold market and a substantial fund management industry.

Without wishing to glide over the important issues raised in the current bids for the Midland bank—reduced competition and possible redundancies among Midland employees, matters which are now rightly being considered by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission—it is worth noting that the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation offers the added dimension of invaluable experience and expertise gained in the world's fastest growing region—Asia. A merged Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and Midland group headquartered in London would be second only to the Deutschebank as one of the world's largest non-Japanese banks.

At this time of rapidly changing circumstances, and as we approach the decision on the location of the European Monetary Institute, can my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary confirm that a close dialogue is being maintained between the Government, the City and the regulators? Could he spell out some of the mechanisms by which that is being achieved? For example, has the dialogue included discussions about the appropriate structure for the British banking community within the European Community, or do the Government take the view that the shape of the industry in Europe should be left to itself and that Governments should concern themselves solely with regulation and competition? Can he assure the House that the Government will do their utmost to ensure a level playing field in these matters?

I was pleased to receive my hon. Friend's answer earlier today—to my question to the Chancellor of the Exchequer asking whether he would encourage British banks to compete within the EC—confirming that the United Kingdom has been in the forefront of those arguing in Brussels for measures that will create a single market in banking, that the Government expect the second banking directive to come into force in January 1993, and that that will result in the removal of barriers to cross-border expansion and will improve competitive opportunities for British banks wishing to do business throughout the Community.

Perhaps my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary could say some additional words about the directives on capital adequacy and investment services, which I understand are being argued over in the Economic and Finance Council.

Above all, can my hon. Friend confirm that the Government will do their utmost to ensure that the case for London, as the location for the European Monetary Institute, will be advanced with vigour and urgency among our European partners?

I remind the House that in the treaty on European union, in the protocol on the statute of the European Monetary Institute, Article 4, which sets out the primary tasks of the institute, says quite specifically that the EMI shall have a duty to

"hold consultations concerning issues falling within the competence of the national central banks and affecting the stability of financial institutions and markets;"

and to

"facilitate the use of the ECU and oversee its development, including the smooth functioning of the ECU clearing system."

The location of the European Monetary Institute could conceivably turn out to be the most important decision affecting London, as the pre-eminent European financial centre, for 50 years. I trust that the Government will energetically support the Lord Mayor's campaign.

I would not dream of tempting my hon. Friend to reveal the Government's negotiating stance on the issue, but could he provide the House with some sign of the timetable that the intergovernmental debate is likely to follow? Does he anticipate a decision at Lisbon, or later this year? Does he believe that there will be support for the choice of London from some other Community members?

From what I have already said this evening, it will be clear that I do not believe that the importance of the decision on the location of the European Monetary Institute can be overestimated. With that belief in mind, I have sought leave to address the House this evening.

10.8 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): I sincerely thank my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) for raising a most important subject this evening—a subject of immense importance to the foreign earnings of this country, to the City of London, to the employment of many thousands of people in this country and elsewhere, and to the development of our role in Europe and the prosperity that we hope that it will generate.

The debate is timely and, on behalf of the Government, I am extremely grateful for my hon. Friend's thoughtful and helpful comments. He said that it would be one of the most important decisions for London in nearly 50 years, and I agree with him. It is a key issue and the Government hope to rise to the challenge of arguing the case for the European Monetary Institute and, later, the European central bank to come to London.

It is a very important subject, and I wholeheartedly endorse my hon. Friend's view of the importance of the City to the British economy. I entirely agree that it is of the first importance that British banks and financial institutions are able to make the most of competitive opportunities within the European Community.

My hon. Friend drew attention to the importance of a decision on the site of the new European Monetary Institute, which would be established by the Maastricht treaty and which would, under that treaty, be replaced by the European central bank. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear this afternoon, although the vote in the Danish referendum made the immediate future with regard to that treaty somewhat cloudy, nevertheless the United Kingdom remains of the view that the treaty is good for Britain and good for Europe. It is therefore sensible that we should continue to discuss its effects.

I was a little bit worried at some stages today that my hon. Friend and I might be dressed up with nowhere to go. The issue that my hon. Friend has raised is of considerable substance and, as the debate evolves and we continue with deliberations on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, I think that it will be central to the debate.

The treaty would provide for separate decisions on the site of the EMI and ECB by common accord at the level of Heads of State or Government. In each case it sets a target date for a decision by the end of this year.

My hon. Friend will be familiar with the decision-taking process on the sites of European institutions and will realise that this is a very ambitious target, particularly now. But, logically, the first decision for the Community to

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take must be on the site of the European Monetary Institute, which under the treaty is due to be operational from January 1994.

My hon. Friend referred in particular to London's bid to host the new EMI. I agree with him that London is, of course, Europe's leading international financial centre and the world's leading centre for ecu business. Against that background, the case is very strong on objective grounds for the new monetary institutions to be in London.

London would undoubtedly be the best place for the EMI to monitor financial developments, it would be the best place for it to develop monetary instruments and by far the best place for it, in the words of the treaty,

"to facilitate the use of the ecu and oversee its development".

Similarly, as and when the time comes for the central bank to be established, the case for location in London is compelling. In short, if the new institutions want to develop their credibility, they would need to be in London.

I am conscious that there have been discussions ranging from whether a central bank or a monetary institute should be in just one location or whether various other formulae might operate whereby a supervisory or central board might be in one location and operational arms in another. That is not up for decision this evening, but it is clear that, wherever the central bank eventually is located —we hope and believe it should be in London—it is absolutely essential that, operationally, it must have a base in London because this is where the action is.

London is, of course, not the only financial centre in the United Kingdom. If for any reason the Community could not agree on placing the EMI in a major centre, there are also excellent smaller United Kingdom candidates in Edinburgh and Manchester, which are both making strong bids.

I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government are fully seized of the issues he has raised. I am grateful to him for highlighting them, and I can assure him that we shall take careful note of the points he has made.

It has been suggested by some that Britain's so-called opt-out in the Maastricht agreement and treaty might limit or ruin our chances of having the central bank in London. I do not accept that for a moment. It is of course for this House to decide in due course whether to participate in the final stage of economic and monetary union, but participation will also depend on member states fulfilling the necessary conditions for a single currency by reference to the convergence criteria in the treaty. We fully intend to meet the criteria, but at this stage no one can be completely sure which other member states will do so.

It is also worth noting that, if we did not participate, the Bank of England would still be part of the European system of central banks, with the Governor sitting on the wider general council of the central bank. It would therefore be misleading to suggest that uncertainty about the United Kingdom position is an absolute bar to the European Monetary Institute or the European central bank coming to the United Kingdom.

Some have suggested that London's future depends on the central bank being located here. Although I believe that it would be a great advantage if the European Monetary Institute and later the central bank came to London, I do not think that London's future depends solely or mainly on these institutions coming here. London's standing and market position are such that, provided it continues its unrivalled traditions of experience, service and innovation, it has little to fear in the years to come.

I should like to say a little more generally about the prospects for the United Kingdom in Europe, especially as we approach the opening of the single market. It has always been the Government's view that British banks have everything to gain from a genuinely open, liberal and competitive market for banking services in the Community. Of course, many of our banks are already well established in other Community countries. The four largest United Kingdom banks already have branch and subsidiary operations in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. One of them, Barclays, has branch and subsidiary operations in all 11 other member states. The smaller and perhaps more specialist institutions are well represented in the key centres too.

If British banks are to make the most of their strengths, however, this inter-penetration of different national banking markets needs to be recognised by the European regulatory system, and we need to ensure that bureaucratic barriers do not inhibit cross-border business opportunities —an issue to which my hon. Friend rightly referred. There are supervisory benefits to be gained from a rationalisation of responsibilities among different national regulators. For all these reasons, the United Kingdom has been in the forefront of those arguing in Brussels for measures that will genuinely create a single open market in banking.

A word about the second banking directive—one of the measures referred to by my hon. Friend. It is the centrepiece of the single market for banks. It was adopted in 1989 and will come into force in January next year. The directive will enable banks from any member state to provide a wide range of banking and financial services in other member states simply on the basis of the authorisation from their home authority, without requiring separate authorisation from the host country. This has come to be known as the banking passport.

Hand in hand with this framework of mutual recognition go a whole series of directives which set common minimum standards for the prudential supervision of banks, taking into account the different risks they run. This harmonisation of prudential rules is a key element of the whole process; it provides the reassurance that the reduction of bureaucracy is not at the expense of standards of regulation.

Taken together, the effect of this package of directives is that barriers to cross-border expansion will be removed, and there will be improved competitive opportunities for banks wishing to do business abroad. Consumers of banking services may also expect the benefits of greater choice and competition.

Of course, Europe is not the only important overseas market for our banks, and it is vital that the breakdown of barriers in Europe should not be accompanied by the creation of new barriers between Europe and the rest of the world. The Community as a whole, and London in particular, benefits rather than loses by remaining open to institutions from outside the Community. That was one of the principles on which the United Kingdom insisted during negotiations on the second directive—with, I am pleased to say, a great measure of success. I attach special importance to that and was pleased to have the opportunity to raise the matter with the Finance Minister of Japan during his recent visit to this country.

We benefit from allowing access to Japanese and other international banks and financial organisations, but there must be reciprocity, and our banks and investment firms must be allowed to enter Japanese markets. I am pleased to say that I have had reassurances in writing from that Minister, and I intend to take the matter forward for United Kingdom and European banks. If the Japanese have access to our markets, we must have competitive access to theirs.

My hon. Friend asked about legislation on the second directive. The deadline for implementation of that directive is 1 January 1993. Work is already well under way on the legislation that is required to transpose the directive into United Kingdom law. A consultation document covering the draft regulations will be issued in the near future. My hon. Friend also spoke about the important issue of the investment services directive and asked what it means for banks. That is an important matter in the context of the level playing field to which my hon. Friend refers because there is some concern that, if the second banking directive comes into force without the investment services directive, the playing field will be slanted unfairly against a key sector of the United Kingdom financial services industry.

I can well appreciate those concerns, and it is quite right to recall that the investment services directive was intended to complement the second banking directive, by delivering an analogous single passport for investment firms, and the aim was that it should be adopted in time for simultaneous implementation.

As my hon. Friend will no doubt be aware, events have turned out rather differently, and the investment services directive negotiations have been stalled for about 18 months following attempts on the part of some other member states to introduce provisions restricting the market rules and organisation that are permitted. As a result, the directive as currently drafted could seriously damage London as a financial centre.

The contentious areas—the requirements concerning publication of prices and volumes of transactions on regulated markets, and the question whether banks should be allowed direct access to stock exchange membership without having to set up subsidiaries in the member countries—are of such importance that it is preferable to accept the possibility of an uneven playing field once the second directive comes into effect than to agree to a bad investment services directive. I emphasise that the Government are negotiating constructively to achieve agreement on the investment services directive in good time for the arrival of the single market at the beginning of next year.

Two measures in particular are currently nearing the top of the Brussels agenda and in them important principles are at stake for British banking. The first measure relates to the important question of the deposit protection arrangements that should back up the new supervisory framework that will be in force from next year. The United Kingdom has long advocated the transfer of responsibility for deposit protection to a home state basis, to parallel responsibility for supervision. The aim is thus that the home state which authorises a bank should also have to ensure that its deposit protection scheme covers deposits in all the EC branches of that bank. Such a move would provide the right incentives to back up the second directive, and is widely supported by other member states.

We therefore very much welcome the Commission's recently proposed draft directive on deposit protection, and look forward to discussing this as a priority under the United Kingdom presidency. As well as allocating responsibility for deposit protection coverage to home states, the Commission's draft directive would introduce certain minimum requirements for deposit protection schemes. These include the provision of at least 90 per cent. protection of deposits until the amount reimbursed reaches 15,000 ecu, which is currently equivalent to about £10,500.

The directive also requires deposits in all currencies to be covered. It envisages that branches abroad would be covered by their home state scheme but with the right to join the host state scheme in order to top up the coverage for their depositors. The draft also proposes that deposit protection payments would have to be made within three months of a bank's closure.

The Government welcome the broad thrust and minimalist nature of the draft directive, and it is hoped that we can make significant progress under the United Kingdom presidency, but the Government have concerns about some of the details, not least the practicability of topping-up, on which further negotiations will be necessary. We shall of course be consulting the United Kingdom industry fully about the issues that arise.

I shall deal now with the complex but highly important issue of the capital adequacy directive—another measure of great importance to British banks in Europe and to security houses and other financial services firms. This is under negotiation in the Council of Ministers. This measure aims to set a common framework of capital requirements for securities firms, but will also refine the existing framework of risk measurement for banks.

The issues at stake in this directive are of course highly technical, but underlying the technical requirements are crucial issues of principle, whose importance is not lost on the City, or the Government. That the directive should deliver a prudent capital adequacy is common ground; what this means in practice is more a matter of dispute. The United Kingdom's concern is that the requirements that are agreed should be appropriately tailored to the different kinds of business covered by the directive; a simple blanket application to securities business of requirements that were designed for long-term and illiquid banking risks would do unnecessary and unjustified damage to key players, both in London and elsewhere in the Community, for no corresponding prudential benefit.

The Government take the view that, if we are to build on the successes already achieved in the banking sector, future regulation must be based on the principle of minimum necessary harmonisation, and in particular must not operate in a way that discriminates unfairly against particular types of institutions or national market structures.

Here, too, there is an important international angle. If Europe burdens itself with a regulatory regime that is significantly more constraining than that of our most important third country competitors, then it is their markets that will gain, at our collective expense. Equally, we must be careful that Europe does not, through indecent haste, undermine moves to harmonise prudential rules for securities business in wider international forums. Many of the questions that are being discussed in the capital adequacy directive are being aired simultaneously in other forums, the BIS forum in particular, and in the

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international securities regulators grouping. If Europe rushes ahead to set its solution in stone, we may find that we damage the wider movement towards international convergence.

I can assure the House and my hon. Friend that the Government are fully seized of the importance of securing an appropriate regulatory regime in this directive. Throughout the negotiations, Ministers and officials have had the benefit of a great deal of constructive and thoughtful input from a wide range of United Kingdom institutions, and we have taken full account of their views. We are determined to secure the best possible outcome we can—always, of course, within the constraints of qualified majority voting.

My hon. Friend referred to cross-border payments. He drew attention to the importance, for consumers and industry, of achieving cheaper and quicker methods of effecting cross-border payments. As he may be aware, the Commission has recently published a report on the ways in which retail cross-border payment systems work at present, and how they can be improved. The Government fully support the intention of improving the speed and efficiency of cross-border payments, but believe that the emphasis—as stressed in the Commission's report—should be very much on the banks introducing their own initiatives in this sector. The industry is already undertaking a good deal of work in this important area, and this should be allowed to develop.

Finally, my hon. Friend made a number of comments on the Lloyds bid and the Hongkong and Shanghai bid for Midland. As he is aware, the former is now before the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and in those circumstances it would not be right for me to comment. However, I can assure him that I have taken full note of what he said, in particular about the Hongkong and Shanghai bid. If he has any concerns that he wishes to put to the commission, it is open for him to do so.

This has been a useful debate, which has given the Government an opportunity to put on record their firm intention of bringing the monetary institutions and the central bank to London, and the importance of the wider opportunities, the glittering prizes, that can be delivered for the banking industry in Europe. I hope that it has been helpful to my hon. Friend.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 4 June 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

Mr. Speaker Weatherill (Retirement)

The Vice-Chamberlain of the Household *reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Address, as follows:*

I have to inform the House, on behalf of the Prime Minister, that the Address of Tuesday 19 May 1992

"praying Her Majesty that she will be most graciously pleased to confer some signal mark of her Royal Favour upon the right hon. Bernard Weatherill for his eminent services during the period in which he presided with such distinguished ability and dignity in the Chair of this House"

has been presented to Her Majesty, and Her Majesty has been pleased to receive the same very graciously and has commanded me to acquaint this House that Her Majesty is desirous, in compliance with the request of her faithful Commons, to confer on the right hon. Bernard Weatherill some signal mark of her Royal Favour.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (JUBILEE) BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 11 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Wages Board

1. **Dr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to abolish the Agricultural Wages Board; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I have no such plans.

Dr. Strang: Does the Minister accept that, notwithstanding that farm workers are disgracefully underpaid, they and their unions are firmly of the view that they would be even worse off if the board were abolished? Is the Minister aware that it is the policy of the National Farmers Union to continue to support the board? Will he therefore expand on his reply and make it clear that the Government will neither renounce the relevant International Labour Organisation convention nor take advantage of the window which opens in August next year to initiate steps to abolish the board?

Mr. Gummer: There are many things that I have to deal with. As this matter cannot be dealt with until next year, I do not regard it as necessary to consider it until that moment arises. When it does, I will; and when I do, I will take into account both the facts that the hon. Gentleman has put before me.

Sugar Beet

2. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to curb the production of sugar beet.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): The United Kingdom will be seeking a thorough going reform of the sugar regime which is due to be completed by July next year.

Mr. Enright: I am grateful to the Minister. He will be aware that the substantial overproduction of sugar beet in the European Community has led to a dreadful situation for world prices and thus for sugar cane producers, who are among the poorest countries in the world. Will he therefore, when he takes over the presidency in July, make sure that the MacSharry proposals, which quite disgracefully ignored the African, Caribbean and Pacific protocol on sugar cane, take account of that overproduction, drastically reduce the production of sugar beet under quota A, abolish quota B, and immediately withdraw the storage premium for quota C? Will he seek those objectives during his presidency?

Mr. Curry: Proposals for reforming the sugar regime will be coming forward shortly. That is one of the matters that we shall have to deal with in our presidency. It is quite clear that, now that there has been a dramatic reform in the cereals sector, the sugar sector must also be reformed. It is clear also that cutting the price and dealing with the overproduction in Europe must be absolutely central to that reform.

Mr. Moss: I congratulate my hon. Friend on negotiating an extremely successful set-aside scheme which does not discriminate against arable farmers in my constituency, but does he accept that there is continuing downward pressure on farm incomes? Will he assure my farmers that, in the next round of negotiations, he will press as hard as he can for an increase in the sugar beet quota?

Mr. Curry: The practical course in reform of the sugar regime is to have a go at C sugar. The problem at present is that the high price for A sugar is used by many continental countries to justify overproduction of C sugar, which is then placed on the world market. If we can tackle that, we shall have dealt with one of the real problems of the regime.

Environmental Protection

3. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what environmental monitoring duties are currently the responsibility of his Department.

7. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list his Department's principal responsibilities for environmental protection.

Mr. Gummer: My Department's policy and monitoring responsibilities are for environmental aspects of farming and for the marine environment.

Mr. McFall: Is not the Minister's desire to take over some of the primary inspection functions of the National Rivers Authority derived from his determination to protect the interests of the multinational farming fertilisers and pesticides manufacturers? Is he not ashamed that in so doing he protects them from the full rigours of a proper environmental protection regime?

Mr. Gummer: I have no such desire and no such intention. My only desire is to ensure that I continue to be known in Europe as—in the best possible sense—the greenest Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister of Agriculture will be aware that he will be undertaking one of his immediate principal environmental responsibilities for the marine environment at the Glasgow meeting of the International Whaling Commission later this month. What does he propose to do to sustain the position that the Government rightly adopted at the last meeting to ensure that there remains an international and effective ban on whaling in future, as there has been in the recent past?

Mr. Gummer: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Government's present policy was presented at the last meeting in Bournemouth, at which I represented the Government, together with Sir Peter Scott. Together we presented that change of policy, which we have pursued ever since. I intend to uphold that position clearly in Glasgow. I also want the ban to be spread to the smaller cetaceans, which are under considerable threat and are wrongly classed in some countries as though they were not whales.

Mr. Gale: That answer will be most welcome to many people who have taken a continuing interest in the future of whales and dolphins. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He has established a clear reputation as a green Minister. Will he reaffirm his Ministry's position with regard to the European presidency? Will he say clearly that he intends to put animal welfare at the top of his priorities during our presidency of the European Community?

Mr. Gummer: I have made it clear that the unity of Europe depends on the best things in each country being adopted by others. One of the best things that we can do for Europe is to raise the standards of animal welfare. I hope that we shall learn a little from some other countries about standards of looking after children.

Mr. Robert Banks: Will my right hon. Friend find time to read a report from the North Atlantic Assembly which highlights the dangers that threaten marine life from chemical weapons which were dumped in the North sea and other seas after the second world war? Does he recognise that such chemicals could pose a considerable threat? Will he be kind enough to look into the matter?

Mr. Gummer: It is obviously important that we examine any threat to the marine environment. I shall be happy to look into the matter.

Mr. David Clark: If the Minister is as green as he claims, why does he allow 35 per cent. of our sites of special scientific interest to be destroyed by farmers? What does he intend to do about that?

Mr. Gummer: Yet again the hon. Gentleman shows his ignorance of farming and of the environment. The electorate showed him what they thought of him at the last election. That is why the environment is safer in my hands than it would ever have been in his.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way of protecting the countryside is to ensure that British agriculture remains profitable and has a viable future? I congratulate him on his tremendous achievements in the common agricultural policy reform discussions, and especially on imposing the requirement that if land is set aside an environmental protective element must be included in the arrangements.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right that the common agricultural policy should have environmental protection at its centre and not as a peripheral matter. That we have sought to do. We have moved environmental protection a long way already. In our presidency we intend to extend it further.

Milk Marketing

4. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the future arrangements for milk marketing in the United Kingdom and the changes he intends to make.

9. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the future arrangments for milk marketing in the United Kingdom and the changes he intends to make.

Mr. Gummer: The Government intend to introduce legislation this Session to facilitate the transformation of the milk marketing boards into non-statutory organisations.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister's reply gives rise to some concern. We are looking for an assurance about the continuation of the services provided by the milk marketing boards. Will the Minister assure me that the cherished and ever-demanded supply of milk to the doorstep by the usual milk roundsmen will continue and that there is no fear of the British housewife and family losing that delivery?

Mr. Gummer: The change in the status of the milk marketing boards has no effect on the delivery of milk at the doorstep. That would be endangered if the milk marketing arrangement continued not to allow British milk producers and sellers to achieve the maximum market. Doorstep delivery is unaffected by our decisions.

Mr. John Evans: Is the Minister aware of the growing fear that a threat to the doorstep delivery of milk is one of the things that will flow from a restructuring? Is he also aware that the Freedom campaign—Friends Electing for the Delivery of Milk—has been formed to protect the delivery of milk and Britain's delivery men and women, and that it aims to collect 5 million signatures? Will he give an undertaking that he and his Department will back that campaign and ensure that the delivery of milk to the doorstep is safeguarded?

Mr. Gummer: As a user and an enthusiastic supporter of the doorstep delivery of milk, I wish the campaign well. It is not signatures that the campaign wants, however, but the willingness of consumers to order milk at the doorstep. The best way we can help doorstep deliveries to continue is by buying at the doorstep. That is for the consumer to decide and she can do so under the new system as under the present one.

Mr. Marland: As my right hon. Friend is aware, many milk producers go to great lengths and are successful in adding value to the raw material by producing locally branded yoghurt, cheese and ice cream. Whatever changes may be made in the milk marketing arrangements, will my right hon. Friend ensure that existing milk producers can continue with that processing and can expand their current efforts?

Mr. Gummer: One of the purposes of our policies is to ensure that those able to add value to milk will be able to get the milk that they need, so that we shall no longer be in the absurd position of not having enough milk for high value products but still putting butter into intervention. I am sure that my hon. Friend will welcome the changes that the milk marketing boards, the Dairy Trade Federation, the Commission and the Government are seeking to produce.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend acknowledge that the statutory milk marketing boards have ensured the availability to the consumer of milk of the highest quality in Europe—with the possible exception of the Danes, to whom we have a lot to be thankful for? Will he bear it in mind that it is absolutely essential, under any new marketing arrangements, that that high quality of milk is preserved for the benefit of the British people?

Mr. Gummer: The proposals, which result from the milk marketing boards deciding that changes are necessary, and which have clearly been endorsed by the fact that the majority of milk producers wish for such change, will defend Britain's position of producing the highest quality milk in Europe. I hope that we shall then be able to raise standards throughout the rest of Europe; that is one of the great advantages of our enthusiastic membership of the Community.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise that, just as farmers who are remote from areas of consumption are worried about the prices that will result from the changed arrangement, consumers fear that the delivery of their daily pinta on the doorstep and its price structure will be threatened? Consumers fear that they will not necessarily receive their daily pinta at the same price if they live in areas remote from the points of production.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman should remember that under the quota system we have less milk than we need for our national requirements. Therefore, producers even in remote areas need not be concerned, as they might be if there were an overproduction of milk in this country. The hon. Gentleman must also accept that the way to defend the daily pinta is to buy it on the doorstep and not merely to talk about doing so. Too many people who are keen on the daily pinta buy their own milk somewhere else.

Factory Farming

5. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will bring forward legislation to give RSPCA inspectors the right of entry to factory farming premises.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): No, Sir. We have no plans to bring forward such legislation.

Mr. Cohen: I congratulate the Minister on his large presence at the Dispatch Box. Why will he not give RSPCA inspectors the power of entry to factory farming premises? Is he aware that the RSPCA recently published statistics which showed a sharp rise in the number of convictions of cruelty to livestock, particularly to sheep and to cattle? That problem of cruelty could best be stopped by giving RSPCA inspectors the power of entry. If the Minister will not do that, will he instruct his own inspectorate to increase significantly its visits to farms so as to stop such cruelty?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who has a fine record on welfare matters. He will know that those arrangements were rehearsed well when the Farm Animal Welfare Council considered the report of its enforcement group. The council recommended that the primary role for on-farm visits should be retained by the state veterinary service and that voluntary bodies should not be given a statutory role. If the hon. Gentleman or any organisation has any complaints to make in that respect, they will be investigated vigorously and speedily, and he should let us know at once.

Mr. Bellingham: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment. Is he aware that many of my constituents, ranging from Thai restaurant owners to proprietors of 25,000 acre estates, rejoiced in his appointment as he is the first Minister of food to know quite a lot about food. Will he deny the rumour in the popular press that he is about to exchange his usual breakfast menu of cold grouse and claret for Alpen and apple juice?

Mr. Soames: I have no plans to do that at present.

Mr. Ron Davies: I offer my personal congratulations to the Minister. I am sure that his appointment will be welcomed on both sides of the House. Given that we have to have a Tory in that office, I suppose that it had better be him.

I thank the Minister for his constructive answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). Will he acknowledge that in intensive farming systems there is potentially a considerable area of abuse and that there can be great suffering? Does he accept that due to bovine spongiform encephalopathy and other health problems his own inspectorate, the state veterinary service, is overburdened with work and is unable to carry out the

level of inspection that it has hitherto? In the short term, will the Minister consider employing private sector vets to carry out the necessary welfare inspections?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He will be aware that any area of farming or husbandry is open to abuse. As he knows, we take such abuse seriously. I will certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's views to the attention of the state veterinary service. I will also write to him in greater detail.

Fishing Industry

6. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to meet the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations to discuss the future of fishing.

Mr. Curry: I met the chairman of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations earlier this week and I am meeting its national executive on 4 July.

Mr. Mitchell: I have just come from a meeting with members of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, and I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his achievement in uniting the fishing industry—for the first time in its history—in total opposition to the measure that he will be proposing on Monday. Does he accept that the measure is necessary only because of his long delay in introducing a proper decommissioning scheme, that it will be disruptive, dangerous and financially crippling for the fishing industry, and that the industry is begging him to think again and propose alternative measures which will be really effective in dealing with conservation?

Mr. Curry: Quite unusually, I agreed with nothing that the hon. Gentleman said. The measures are necessary. It is easy to talk about conservation, but when we have come up with alternative ideas, the industry has tended to oppose every one of them. At the end of the day, we must be serious about conservation. The stocks are in very serious danger, not just in British waters but in waters throughout the world. We can tackle that only by adopting a series of measures, of which decommissioning is one. Effort control, licence extension and industry-led rationalisation are all part of conservation and represent a sensible, balanced package. It is important that all elements of the package should be introduced.

Mr. Harris: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his promotion. Will he agree that one of the biggest threats to the future of the fishing industry is the recent growth in the number of foreign boats being transferred to our register? I refer not just to Spanish boats, but to the large number of Dutch boats coming on to our register. Will the Government use their six months presidency of the European Council to try to achieve some political agreement with other fisheries Ministers to deal with the scourge once and for all and to put an end to that diabolical practice?

Mr. Curry: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. It is a problem. We took measures to deal with some of the problems of beamers on the east coast, which is, of course, a Dutch problem. With regard to the pretentions of the Spanish and Portuguese to fish in some Community waters, my hon. Friend will be pleased to know that the Advocate General delivered an opinion which was helpful, though the full court ruling has yet to come. Our presidency will be devoted to matters of enforcement and making sure that European fishing grounds are predominantly for Europeans and for the benefit of coastal communities who depend on them.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Is the Minister aware that fishermen greatly resent the measure to be introduced on Monday and allege that there has not been proper consultation between them and the Minister? What has been the level of consultation? Has the hon. Gentleman met the fishermen's organisations before presentation of the Bill?

Mr. Curry: The Government's measures on fisheries were announced at the end of February. It was stated clearly then that effort control was part of our policy. We then introduced a consultation document, immediately after the general election—it would have been constitutionally improper to do so earlier, even though it was ready just before the election—dealing with all the details of decommissioning and effort control. I very much want detailed consultation and discussion about how this will work in practice. The Bill will give me power to attach to the licence a condition to introduce effort control. All the details of that are still subject to consultation, and that consultation is entirely valid.

Council of Ministers

8. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are his objectives during his presidency of the Council of Agriculture Ministers.

Mr. Gummer: I shall seek to carry forward the process of common agricultural policy reform, complete the single market, improve animal welfare and make environmental considerations much more central to the CAP.

Mr. Nicholson: May I, too, congratulate my right hon. Friend on his success in the recent negotiations? It represents one of the more hopeful precursors of the United Kingdom presidency. During that presidency, will he give great emphasis to achieving higher standards where appropriate, effective enforcement and, above all, a level playing field on such matters as national subsidies for environmental purposes, food hygiene and that most important area to which he referred—animal welfare?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words. It is clearly important that controls over the cruel production of veal and pigs should be extended to the whole of the Community. We should not take a nationalistic view of animal welfare; it should apply throughout the EC, as our membership of the Community demands.

Mr. Tyler: Is the Minister satisfied that the proposals for the reform of the CAP will reduce the major, and in some sectors increasing, discrepancy between farm and retail prices? Is he further satisfied that there will be opportunities for producers in all sectors to benefit from the proposals without the risk of increased prices to the consumer?

Mr. Gummer: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment on this occasion, his first appearance in his new role. We have to face the fact that under present

policies, which I understand the hon. Gentleman's party supports, prices paid by consumers are higher than they would otherwise be. CAP reform has led to a reduction in consumer support and an increase in taxpayer support. At the same time, the farmer is being asked to take a price which is much closer to the market value. In those circumstances, we have the fairest situation between farmers and countries.

Mr. Ralph Howell: I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend on the success of the recent price round. Will he assure us that the cereal market will continue to be supported by intervention and that the prices will apply to feed-quality cereals?

Mr. Gummer: I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall continue to support the cereal producer, not simply by intervention, which will be properly diminished, but by compulsory set-aside, compensation and area payments. That is what the United Kingdom has demanded and that is another example of the way in which the EC has increasingly taken on Britain's views.

Dr. David Clark: The House will be disappointed that the Minister has not decided to highlight food hygiene as one of the key issues of his presidency. Does not he understand that the majority of British people want high-quality food? Has not he seen the recent study of the trading standards officers in Birmingham which shows that 90 per cent. of eggs sampled were substandard and that most of those were imported? When will he stand up and speak for the British consumer?

Mr. Gummer: I do not need to stand up and speak for the British consumer. I have put through the House the most extensive food safety legislation of any country. The hon. Gentleman is constantly selling short British food. He is the man who told us not to eat British sausages or British apples. The hon. Gentleman has no right to speak for British food producers and the electorate told him that in no uncertain terms.

Mr. Lord: My right hon. Friend is a very fair man. During his presidency of the Council, will he make his main aim the fairest possible application of rules and regulations governing agriculture throughout the EC, which is a matter of great concern to us all? In particular, I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the devastating effect that the unfair application of rules and regulations is having on the poultry-processing industry in my constituency in Suffolk where veterinary inspection charges are crippling, putting the industry at a severe disadvantage compared with its competitors in Europe.

Mr. Gummer: I will and I am.

Animal Welfare

10. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to improve the welfare of animals at slaughter.

Mr. Soames: We shall improve the training of slaughtermen, implement outstanding Farm Animal Welfare Council recommendations as soon as possible and make sure that Britain's high standards are adopted throughout the rest of the Community.

Mr. Fyfe: I thank the new Minister for his helpful answer and I hope that he will continue to give such answers. What advice has the Ministry sought on the slaughter of animals according to religious custom so that those customs are respected while cruelty to the animals is avoided? Will he seek advice from any religious bodies that consider it helpful to offer such advice?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Lady raises an important point. The law on the welfare of animals at slaughter applies equally to religiously slaughtered animals, apart from the requirement for pre-stunning. In 1990, the Government introduced new legal safeguards on religious slaughter. In particular, the use of casting pens for cattle is being phased out and, from July this year, cattle will be required to be slaughtered in an upright, specially approved restraining pen. In expressing their concern, the hon. Lady and her constituents speak for many, and I hope that my reply reassures them.

Mr. Burns: Does my hon. Friend accept that improving welfare standards at slaughter should embrace the transportation of animals to the place of slaughter? Will he and my right hon. Friend the Minister do all that they can during my right hon. Friend's presidency to ensure that European practices and behaviour are raised to the levels that obtain in Britain? Quite frankly, far too often standards in Europe are totally unacceptable.

Mr. Soames: Yes, we shall do just that. My hon. Friend is perfectly right to raise that point. We shall seek to raise the standards observed by our partners in the European Community to the same high levels that apply in this country.

Mr. Beggs: On behalf of my hon. Friends, I congratulate the Minister on his appointment. We all welcome the Government's efforts to ensure the welfare of animals at slaughter. Does the Minister agree that of equal, if not greater, importance is the welfare of the consumers of the end products? What assurance can he give that adequate safeguards are in place to ensure that even the minimum use of illegal substances for growth promotion can be detected at abattoirs?

Mr. Soames: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we run the most extensive and vigorous checks in this country. We are always alert to any possible dangers. Despite regular testing, illegal substances have never been found in this country—but we will continue vigorously to police that aspect.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend accept that great cruelty occurs not only at slaughter on the continent but in the transportation of animals to slaughter on the continent? Does he agree that animals in this country and in continental countries should be slaughtered as closely as possible to their place of origin?

Mr. Soames: Yes, my hon. Friend is perfectly correct. As I said earlier, we seek to raise standards in the rest of the European Community to the high levels that prevail in this country.

Mr. Morley: Is the Minister aware that because of the high standards in slaughterhouses in this country, the poultry sector in particular is disadvantaged? Because the standards observed by European competitors do not reach the same level, they enjoy a cost advantage on imports. If

the Government accept that some slaughterhouses on the continent do not meet our high standards, what will the Minister do about British producers that drag animals many hundreds of miles over long periods of time, to be slaughtered in poor-quality slaughterhouses abroad?

Mr. Soames: My right hon. Friend the Minister dealt earlier with the question of cost. We intend to raise the question of standards and costs with the Community, to ensure that our producers are in no way disadvantaged. Transport is a matter to which we attach the highest importance. During our presidency, we shall seek to raise it to the top of the agenda.

Plant Passports

11. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current state of negotiations within the European Community on the subject of plant passports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Under pressure from this Government, the Commission has undertaken to bring forward proposals in the near future.

Mrs. Roe: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his promotion and thank him for that reply. Is he aware of the concern of United Kingdom growers about the greater bureaucracy and cost implicit in the proposals? Can he give an assurance that they will not be disadvantaged by comparison with our European Community partners, in respect of the financing of the inspections required under the proposed plant health arrangements?

Mr. Curry: We intend this to be a measure of deregulation. The word "passport" can be misleading. There is no passport officer and no physical passport; the term refers to a mark that can be applied by the propagator himself. We intend the regime to be as light as possible, but we also want it to be applied as sensibly as possible and—this is most important—as universally as possible, so that we can ensure that we are on a level playing field.

Product Marketing

13. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his plans for improving the marketing of British agricultural products.

Mr. Curry: We are encouraging better marketing through collaboration between producers. The group marketing grant will help them to develop large, professionally managed groups.

Mr. Riddick: Is it not a pretty crass piece of marketing to move the manufacture of Wensleydale cheese from Yorkshire to Lancashire? Can my hon. Friend do anything to persuade Dairy Crest to sell the Wensleydale factory in Hawes, either to an outside buyer or through a management buy-out?

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) has been actively engaged in this regard. As a fellow North Yorkshire Member, I can only endorse the view that Wensleydale cheese is far better coming from Yorkshire than from Lancashire—but that is true of all the other cheeses as well.

Mr. Skinner: What steps will the Minister take to help three farmers in Bolsover to market their products? Does he recall that, nearly 12 months ago, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food promised the House that they would not lose out? According to *Farmers Weekly*, the Minister is not going to pay those farmers any more money. They have lost their livelihoods and the Bolsover people are fed up with contamination by dioxins. It is time that those farmers were paid and it is time that a public inquiry was carried out.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has dealt fully with points about the matter on many occasions.

Bananas

14. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the accessibility of the British market to Latin American bananas.

Mr. Curry: The Commission has published a working paper on banana imports aiming to fulfil all the Community's international obligations.

Mr. Arnold: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that the Latin American republics from which bananas come are third world countries just as deserving of our consideration as the Caribbean islands? Are not British consumers entitled to those bananas, which are larger, cheaper and, by and large, of higher quality than the ones that are currently being imported?

Mr. Curry: I am sure that my hon. Friend knows that British consumers do indeed benefit from those bananas. Last year, about 28 per cent. of bananas consumed in Britain came from Latin America and we believe that this year the quantity could comfortably be 100,000 tonnes. However, we have an obligation to protect the position of our traditional suppliers in Jamaica and the Windward islands. It is entirely possible for us to do that while ensuring adequate access for Latin American bananas.

Dr. Godman: May I remind the Minister that many of those engaged in the production of Latin American bananas are employed in lousy conditions by big American firms? Will he ensure that the producers—the small farmers in the Windward islands and elsewhere—are protected from the obduracy of the Germans in regard to exports to the Community of their very fine product?

Mr. Curry: We have made it absolutely clear that we stand by our obligations to the Windward islands and Jamaica, enabling them to continue to have full access to our market. The European Community seems likely to introduce proposals to impose a quota on dollar bananas. To be fair, the dollar bananas are likely to take any increase in the market, because they are better placed; but our stance is that producers from the ACP—African Caribbean Pacific—countries must be fully protected, because of the importance of that crop to their industries and economies.

Meat Hygiene

15. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his proposals for meat hygiene.

Mr. Soames: My right hon. Friend the Minister has announced that a national meat hygiene service is to be established as an agency of his Department.

Mrs. Winterton: I welcome today's announcement that an agency is to be set up to replace the former piecemeal arrangements. When will that agency be fully operational, and what charging policy will be introduced? The Department should bear in mind the necessity to keep costs low and provide good value for money, to ensure that excellent British meat and meat products are available to the consumer at competitive prices.

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Subject to the will of Parliament, the new agency will take over in late 1994 or early 1995. It will enable us to achieve consistent enforcement standards and a uniform basis for charging in Great Britain. By putting our own house in order, we shall be better placed to put pressure on the Commission and other member states to achieve the same standards across the Community. We are wholly committed to securing improvements in what is currently an unsatisfactory situation.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Does the Minister accept that very small abattoirs, which have to take into consideration the cost of visits by meat inspectors and vets, are very worried about the high costs of those visits when the new regulations come into force? Does he also accept that small abattoirs are very important to rural economies? Will he take on board representations made to him that those costs should be kept as low as possible?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman raises a very important point. We agree entirely that small slaughterhouses are vital to rural communities. We have secured a special derogation for 12-to-20-animal units. Welfare and hygiene standards will apply to large or small slaughterhouses, but the point on charges is well taken.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): May I first congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on joining Her Majesty's Privy Council this morning. As you did so, I was presiding over a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Moss: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the smaller countries have a vital part to play in the life of the European Community? Does he further agree that Denmark should not be sidelined or pressurised, merely because its people expressed their views in a democratic way about the Maastricht treaty?

The Prime Minister: I emphatically agree with my hon. Friend about that. The work of the Community will go on, and Denmark and all the other small member states will play their full part in it. We have no wish whatsoever to slam the doors in the face of Denmark or to rule out any procedures whatsoever that will help Denmark in her present difficulties and enable her to join the Maastricht treaty. But it is unrealistic to think that everything has been changed by the Danish vote, just as it is unrealistic to think that nothing has been changed by it.

Mr. Cryer: But does not the Prime Minister accept, in the wake of the mess that the Common Market is happily in now, as a result of the Danish referendum, that if he brings back a renegotiated treaty and some sort of deal with the Danish Government, there will be a great deal of pressure in this country to require the Government to hold a referendum here over any constitutional alterations which might be involved in that new treaty?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that I made the Government's position about a referendum entirely clear yesterday, and I have nothing whatsoever to add to that today. On the subject of the treaty itself, there is a great deal in it that represents concessions by our partners to what we have long sought in this country. That would also be open to renegotiation, if any renegotiations were to take place. I hope that today in Oslo, where my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is attending a meeting, they will begin to examine in detail the way to deal with the particular difficulties, following the referendum in Denmark.

Q2. **Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hicks: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the growing unease of both listeners and viewers about the coverage of live sport? Irrespective of the long-term implications of the deal over the premier league football coverage, is my right hon. Friend aware that there was genuine resentment, among my constituents at least, during the recent world cup coverage from Australia? There is uncertainty over the future of the ball-by-ball cricket commentaries. Is it not a fact that the arrangements that were designed to give greater opportunities to listen or to watch seem, in practice, to be having the reverse effect?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows—I am pleased about this, as he is—ball-by-ball cricket commentaries are now continuing, albeit on a different wavelength. I know that some people have been and are concerned whenever areas of activity are opened up by market forces—that has often been the case in the past—but in time many of those anxieties have disappeared and the beneficial effects have found their way through. The net effect of new television channels is that there is more and better coverage of sport on a wider number of channels.

Mr. Hattersley: Does the Prime Minister recall the statement on 26 March that an asylum Bill would be the first action of a new Conservative Government? Why did he change his mind?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will see the asylum Bill before too long.

Mr. Hattersley: The Prime Minister characteristically tried to evade the question. On 26 March the asylum Bill was to be the first priority, to be introduced before anything else. Why was that Bill needed so urgently before the election, but not afterwards?

The Prime Minister: I am intrigued at the right hon. Gentleman's sudden enthusiasm for the Bill. I can put his mind at rest. The Government are committed to reintroducing the asylum Bill at an early opportunity and we propose to do so.

Mr. Hattersley: Nobody should be surprised that the Prime Minister is ashamed to give the real answer. The Asylum Bill was introduced in an attempt to legitimise many of the scare stories about immigration put about by the Tory party. It is to the Prime Minister's shame that he is not prepared to denounce that policy and attitude now.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman should know better than to make remarks such as that. As we have said in the past, it was the first Bill that we decided to reintroduce and put into the Queen's Speech. It remains essential now, as it was then, to streamline the decision-making process. We intend to resist the misuse of asylum procedures and to ensure that genuine refugees are properly protected. That is the position of the Bill, and it will be introduced shortly.

Q3. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the overwhelming case for the enlargement of the European Community has been in no way diminished by the result of the Danish referendum? Can he assure my constituents in Swindon and the entire country that he will use the opportunity presented by the United Kingdom's presidency of the Community in the next six months to press the case as vigorously as he can for the enlargement of the Community to include the countries of the European Free Trade Association and the countries of central and eastern Europe when they are ready to join?

The Prime Minister: No one in this country or within the Community can be in any doubt about my total commitment to opening up the Community to the EFTAns and, in due course, to those from eastern Europe. Nothing that has happened in recent days changes my belief that that is necessary and urgent, and we will continue with it. I do not accept that anything has put enlargement at risk. I can assure my hon. Friend that this will have a high priority during our presidency.

Mr. Mackinlay: Is the Prime Minister aware of the dismay felt by a number of hon. Members and many historians at the fact that the papers relating to Rudolf Hess are still not being fully disclosed? Is he aware that it is the view of many people that there is a continuing Establishment cover-up which should now be revealed and that the undisclosed papers reveal matters relating to the non-royal status of the Duchess of Windsor?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid that I cannot share the hon. Gentleman's conspiracy theory. If there has been a cover-up, it has been covered up from me as well.

Q4. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gill: My right hon. Friend will have noted early-day motion 174, which has been signed by a substantial number of Conservative Members. Is he aware of their deep desire that the British presidency should promote the Conservative principles of free trade and intergovernmental co-operation and not the socialist diktats of Jacques Delors?

The Prime Minister: I assure my hon. Friend that we shall certainly use the presidency to pursue issues that are in our interests and those of the whole Community: the introduction of the single market, reform of the CAP, developing relations with the EFTA and eastern countries, future financing and deregulation—matters for which this party and this country have stood for so long. We shall pursue all of them during our presidency.

Q6. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mitchell: Does the Prime Minister accept that, in the face of the Danish announcement today that they will not attempt to renegotiate, to reintroduce the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, which we would have discussed yesterday and today, would be like reintroducing a Bill for the resurrection of Shergar?

The Prime Minister: I do not accept that premise and the hon. Gentleman would be rather surprised if I did. The Maastricht treaty was the result of a lot of difficult negotiations that were conducted over some time. If we went back to square one, I do not think that we could assume that our partners would agree all the matters that are of interest to this country. We must wait and see how events fall out.

Q7. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Amess: Following the collapse of socialism in Basildon, does my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agree that last month's local election results in Basildon, which ensured the success of every Conservative candidate, showed that residents were fed up with an inefficient, high-spending socialist council and believed that only Conservatives could provide good services at a low cost? Does the Prime Minister have any advice for the new council on where it might stick the nuclear-free-zone signs? That was another daft socialist idea.

The Prime Minister: I feel sure that my hon. Friend will already have passed any advice that is necessary to the new Basildon council. I very much doubt whether I would dissent from what he said. The electors in Basildon made an extremely wise choice in the local elections and in the general election, and I am sure that it is a choice which they will repeat many times in the future.

Q8. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marshall: As part of his "taking stock" of the situation in Scotland, has the Prime Minister made any representations to the EC to have the European central bank set up in Scotland? If not, will he agree to do so now?

The Prime Minister: I have made no representations, as the hon. Gentleman puts it, on this matter, but we shall certainly do what we can to ensure that, whenever possible, Community institutions, including the bank, are situated in the right place in the United Kingdom.

Q9. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thompson: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the recent launch of the campaign for physics and of a survey of sixth-formers which showed that 90 per cent. of them believe that physics is essential to solve the world's environmental problems? Does he agree that good science is preferable to slick pressure group campaigning, to ensure that the Earth summit at Rio leads to a good future for our planet?

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of understanding physics, although I must confess that I cannot claim to be among those who understand it very well at all. However, environmental education is an important theme of education these days and I hope that it will be a growing theme. It will certainly enable people to understand the deeply important issues to be discussed at Rio.

Q10. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Williams: When the Prime Minister took his present post, he described the notion of a society at ease with itself. Does he feel that when he goes to the Earth summit next week, against a background of a dismal record on the environment in Britain and development aid having been cut from 0·51 per cent. of gross domestic product to 0·27 per cent. during his years in the House, he will be representing a society at ease with itself?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman, perhaps uncharacteristically, runs down what this nation has done and is doing to assist with aid. He conveniently ignores the fact that we have the sixth largest aid budget in the world, that it is one of the most effective programmes that the OECD recognises—[HON. MEMBERS: "It has been cut in half."] It most certainly has not been cut in half as was inaccurately stated earlier this week. He ignores the fact that there are other forms of aid that we can and do give, that the Toronto terms originated with my former right hon. Friend, Nigel Lawson, that the Trinidad terms originated under this Government and that they are two of the biggest debt write-offs that there have ever been, and that there is no other country with a comparable record and no previous Government with a comparable record to that of this Government.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 8 JUNE—Second Reading of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill.

TUESDAY 9 JUNE—Opposition day (1st allotted day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate entitled "Ethnic Minorities in British Society", followed by a debate entitled "Protecting the Maxwell Pensioners". Both debates arise on Opposition motions.

Motion relating to the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill.

Motion on the Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Construction Board) Order.

WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE—Until about seven o'clock, consideration in Committee of the Finance Bill.

Motion on the Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order.

THURSDAY 11 JUNE—Debate on Government policy on science and technology on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 12 JUNE—Debate entitled "Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the 1992-93 Price Proposals" on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 15 JUNE—Second Reading of the Boundary Commissions Bill.

[Monday 8 March
Floor of the House
Relevant European Community Documents

(a) 10229/91	*Common Fisheries Policy*
(b) 5088/92	*Quality Policy for Fishery products*
(c) 5210/92	*Monitoring Implementation of the CFP*
(d) 5337/92	*Discard Practice in Community Fisheries*
(e) 5351/92 ADD 1	*Common Organisation of the Market in Fishery Products*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 24-ix (1991-92)
(b) (c) (d) (e) No Reports

Friday 12 June
Floor of the House
Relevant European Community Documents

(a) 7570/91	*Common Agricultural Policy*
(b) 5534/92 ADD 1-3	*Prices for Agricultural Products and related measures for 1992-93*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 29-xxix (1990-91), HC 24-iii (1991-92)
(b) No Report.]

Dr. Cunningham: May we have a statement on Monday by the Foreign Secretary following his discussions today in Oslo at the meeting of the Council of Ministers? Given the importance of what has happened in the Danish referendum and its significance for the Maastricht treaty, it is surely important that the House should have the earliest possible statement from the Foreign Secretary, and that should be on Monday. I hope that the Leader of the House can assure us that that statement will be made.

Will the Leader of the House think again about the business for Friday next week? It is surely beyond doubt that the proposed changes to the common agricultural policy which are to be debated are of huge importance and significance for producers and farmers, and also for consumers. Given that it will, by common consent, be a discussion on some of the most fundamental changes for perhaps a quarter of a century, should not we have the debate on a day other than a Friday when many hon. Members, for important and legitimate reasons, will be in their constituencies and therefore unable to participate in it? Seriously and earnestly, I ask the Leader of the House to reconsider that decision and change the day of the debate.

Given the fact that the Government have failed to provide time for a statement, let alone a debate, on the plight of Maxwell pensioners, and that the Labour party has, rightly, provided Supply day time for such a debate, may we have an assurance that the Minister will not only participate in the debate, as obviously he will, but will set out in detail what urgent action the Government intend to take to help to alleviate the problems faced by Maxwell pensioners?

Will the Leader of the House reflect on today's business —specifically, the Bill on community care—and agree that we should discuss only the Second Reading today? There is plenty of time for the Bill to be considered in Standing Committee. I believe that it would be for the convenience of the Government and Ministers as well as for the convenience of the House as a whole if that proposal were adopted.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman asked four questions. The first was whether my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary would make a statement on Monday following the Oslo meeting. I had originally hoped that it might be possible for a statement to be made tomorrow, but that seems in doubt. I think that I can give the hon. Gentleman the undertaking that he wants, that there will be a statement on Monday. I hope that, in turn, he will recognise that it may be difficult for my right hon. Friend to maintain an entirely trappist position throughout the weekend, so I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not take offence if he does not.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman made a complaint—as I suppose it must be called—about the fact that we shall debate the common agricultural policy on a Friday. I resist the suggestion that merely because the day is a Friday it is not possible to debate a subject of importance. That would imply a grave diminution of many subjects that have been debated on Fridays—and indeed of the House's sittings on Friday. In view of what has happened, it is right that we have tried to make time for a debate on the common agricultural policy, as well as the debate on science and technology on Thursday—that is also an important subject. I believe that the desirability of debating the matter soon outweighs the considerations mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he accepts that I feel that that is the right way to proceed, so as to give the House the earliest opportunity to debate two important subjects.

Thirdly, the hon. Gentleman mentioned Maxwell. I have made it clear several times that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will—soon, I hope—make a statement on the establishment of the review of the framework of pensions law which the Government have undertaken to set up. I cannot give an absolute commitment about the timing of that, but it is clear that there will be two opportunities for such matters to be raised in the first two days of next week—one on Department of Social Security questions, and one on the Supply day. I shall not attempt to write my right hon. Friend's speech for the debate, or his answers to questions, at this stage, but I am sure that he is aware of the concern that comment should be made about the matters raised by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)—and I shall again draw it to his attention.

Lastly, in answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about today's business, I am glad to say that I understand that there have been further discussions through the usual channels about the handling of the Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Bill. In the light of those discussions, I propose that we proceed only with the Second Reading of the Bill today, and allow it to be further considered in a Standing Committee. I hope that that will also meet the wishes of the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), who raised the matter with me yesterday.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Will my right hon. Friend tell us what progress he hopes to make next week in setting up the departmental Select Committees? With so much happening, especially in foreign affairs, it seems a pity that the Committees are not in place to monitor the Executive in the proper way. I ask you, Madam Speaker, whether, from your high position, you can give encouragement and support to the setting up of the Select Committees so that Parliament can do its job properly.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): He wants to get on a trip.

Mr. Newton: I——

Mr. Skinner: The Government have lost three months already.

Mr. Newton: I see that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is in his usual inimitable form. I would not wish to be taken as endorsing his comments on the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), which is important.

I have said on a number of occasions that I am anxious to see progress made as quickly as possible in setting up the Select Committees. We have already made some progress with the setting up of the Committee of Selection and the Public Accounts Committee. We have been able to set up the European Standing Committees—a slightly separate point. I hope that we shall soon get the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and the Select Committee on European Legislation. I look to make progress as soon as we can on the departmental Select Committees, including the one in which my right hon. Friend is interested.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Will the Lord President issue next week the Top Salaries Review Body report on office cost allowance? He must be aware that hon. Members of all parties are anxious about the report because they want to make suitable appointments of staff. That is important for the staff. Will the right hon. Gentleman also give an assurance that the full report will be adopted by the Government?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give the right hon. Gentleman a precise prediction now of the exact time of the publication of the report or the exact proposals that I expect to explain to the House at that time. I can say—the right hon. Gentleman will realise that I have had one or two other things on my mind in recent days—that I hope that we shall be able to do so soon.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Can my right hon. Friend tell us whether the opportunity for a debate next week on Maxwell will give the Secretary of State for Social Security an opportunity to make a statement about the implementation of section 58B of the Social Security Act 1990 which would make the Maxwell pensioners creditors of Maxwell Communication Corporation and of Mirror Group Newspapers? The consequence would be that many hundreds of millions of pounds could flow back into those pension funds.

Mr. Newton: Clearly the debate next week will give my right hon. Friend opportunities to make comments as he thinks right on a wide variety of matters. As I have already said, I will not attempt to make his speech across the Dispatch Box this afternoon, but I will ensure that his attention is drawn to my hon. Friend's request.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Reverting to the question of the creation of the departmental Select Committees, surely it is within the Government's gift to decide which Departments will be covered in the new regime which the right hon. Gentleman has set up. Presumably there is no difficulty about making an early statement on that.

Is there any prospect, having regard to the special circumstances surrounding the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill which we shall discuss on Monday, of the right hon. Gentleman being prepared to recommend the referral of Second Reading to a Special Standing Committee, given that the industry believes that it has not had proper time for consultation?

Mr. Newton: I will give some thought to the hon. Gentleman's point. My principal concern is that we should make progress on that important measure which is needed, in association with other proposals involving finance, in the interests of a sensible fisheries policy and a sensible basis of operation for the fishing industry.

On the first question, the hon. Gentleman, in his new capacity in what are called the "usual channels", will realise the need for considerable discussions about these matters. Those discussions are proceeding. I cannot go any further than I already have in relation to what I said to my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell).

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Although I welcome the opportunity during an Opposition Supply day to debate the Maxwell pensioners' problems, does my right hon. Friend agree that it will be a sterile debate unless the results of the Government's investigations are to hand and can be considered? Will my right hon. Friend do what he can to ensure that the Securities and Investments Board report is made available as a paper for the whole House? The debate next week can then have some meaning.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend knows that a considerable number of inquiries of various kinds are going on in respect of those affairs. The one to which he has referred would normally be under the general aegis of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade rather than that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. Again, I shall make sure that my right hon. Friends are made aware of my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Will the Leader of the House look again at the business for next week and see whether time could be found to debate the provision of dental services within the national health service? Many dentists in my constituency have expressed deep concern about actions taken recently by the Secretary of State for Health which cast doubt on the viability of many dental practices in my constituency and the availability of dental services within the NHS. It is an important matter which the House needs time to debate.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the dental rate study group met yesterday and considered the proposals which were announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health the previous day. I understand that the dental rate study group will meet again to continue its discussions in a week or two. I am not sure whether it would be appropriate to have such a debate at the moment, but clearly it would have been open to Opposition Members to take part in next week's Supply day debate had they thought it right to do so.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): May I support what many of my colleagues have said about Tuesday's debate on Maxwell? There is to be a mass lobby in the House on Monday by Maxwell pensioners, many of whom are my constituents. They want to know what the Government will do about the matter. They have been swindled out of their pensions and they are very worried, and understandably so. Can my right hon. Friend give us some assurance before the debate?

Mr. Newton: I can give my hon. Friend the clear assurance that my right hon. Friends and I are very much aware of the concern on both sides of the House and among others about this matter. I shall certainly ensure that my hon. Friend's remarks are drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friend, but I do not think that I can go beyond what I have already said on a couple of occasions about the position in respect of the debate next week.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Is the Leader of the House aware that his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage has made the very important announcement today by way of a written answer to one of his hon. Friends that the Government will review their policy on all-seater stadiums for football clubs, especially in the third and fourth divisions? Will he take it from me that hon. Members will consider that to be a very important and sensible announcement? In view of the fact that improvements have taken place in football grounds in the past few years, that is extremely sensible.

Will the Leader of the House consider initiating a debate so that those who lost their loved ones in the Hillsborough disaster may have their fears allayed by the fact that the Secretary of State has taken very much into account the improved situation for football grounds and that in no way will safety requirements be jettisoned as a result of the review?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can respond immediately, or indeed even less than immediately, to the hon. Gentleman's request for a debate. I can certainly welcome, on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage, the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the statement. I too think that it is a very sensible move.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): My right hon. Friend will be aware of Conservative Members' concern about the problem of gipsies and so-called new-age travellers. He will be aware also of the recent terrible scenes in the west country and the apparent inadequacy of the police to cope. May we therefore have an early debate on that important subject—it is certainly a nuisance to many of our constituents who have such people living close to them—and look again at the Caravan Sites Act 1968 and the Public Order Act 1986? The problem seems to be getting worse and we do not seem to be addressing it.

Mr. Newton: Again, I do not think that I can promise my hon. Friend an early debate on that matter. I can certainly assure him that the Government take the issue seriously, although it is not an easy one to tackle. It is right that any proposed action should be carefully thought through.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for a statement on the adverse effect of the privatisation of hospital cleaning services on quality, hygiene and public safety? Is he aware that it was revealed today that in Royal Alexandra hospital in my constituency a firm of private cleaning contractors threw waste infected with tuberculosis into the public waste disposal system? Does he agree that it is a disgrace that the policy of putting profits before patient care is leading to such instances, caused by poor working practices, in the very institutions that are supposed to protect public health?

Mr. Newton: While I should naturally be worried about the incident that the hon. Gentleman describes—I have not had any opportunity to check it, so I cannot endorse his description—I resist the suggestion that such incidents occur only where private contracting firms are involved. For example, I think back to the time when I was a Minister in the former Department of Health and Social Security and the difficulties at the Stanley Royd hospital in Wakefield. The hon. Gentleman should think more carefully before making implied allegations about private sector operators.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): May I return to the question of the setting up of the departmental Select Committees, having listened to the brief but fairly vigorous exchange from a sedentary position between the two Front Benches. As I understand it, we are all waiting for the largest Opposition party to sort out its leadership and spokesmanship difficulties. But I understand from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that the delay has something to do with the Government Front Bench. I do not understand. Some of us would rather like to get on with doing some useful work.

Mr. Newton: I was unaware of the informal exchanges to which my hon. Friend refers because I was addressing the House rather than listening to whatever exchanges

took place. My clear understanding is that all of us who are involved in these matters—it is certainly true in my case—wish to make progress as soon as possible but on the basis of the necessary consideration and discussion.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): When the Maxwell debate takes place next Tuesday, will the Minister who replies to the debate explain the legal position whereby the Maxwell family apparently continues to have substantial income and assets abroad while pensioners have been swindled out of their pensions? Some pensioners now live in destitution. Could the Attorney-General come to the House and explain why, despite what has happened, there has been no prosecution? Is there now a special law in Britain under which the Maxwell family and those associated with it commercially are immune from prosecution?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well not only that an inquiry is being conducted by the Securities and Investments Board—my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) referred to it—but a substantial investigation is being held by the Serious Fraud Office. Clearly, questions of prosecution arise following investigations, not during or before them. The suggestion that the Maxwells have some sort of immunity is simply ludicrous.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Is my right hon. Friend aware of early-day motion 9?

[That this House welcomes the Report of the Select Committee on the Sittings of the House, HC20, Session 1991-92, which considered 'whether the public and private business of the House might be conducted more effectively by making changes to the order and timing of business, the hours of sitting and the arrangement of the parliamentary year'; notes the recommendations of the report and the debate on 2nd March 1992; and urges the Government to provide time to discuss further and consider on substantive motions and vote on the recommendations of the report at the earliest opportunity.]

It calls for the opportunity further to discuss the report of the Select Committee on the Sittings of the House and a chance to vote on its recommendations. The motion has been signed by more than 80 Members. Can my right hon. Friend give an assurance that we shall have an opportunity to debate the report before the summer recess?

Mr. Newton: Yes.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): When the Leader of the House reports back to his colleagues at the Department of Social Security, will he please add my views? Will he tell his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security that, while hon. Members on both sides of the House welcome the Government's acceptance of the Social Security Select Committee recommendation that there should be a long-term review of pensions law, it does not help one Maxwell pensioner? Will he also tell him that when we have the debate on Tuesday we shall be anxious that he should make a statement on what the Government intend to do to help what will be by the end of the month 6,000 pensioners who have either lost their pension entirely, or had it reduced substantially?

Mr. Newton: The whole House is well aware of the hon. Gentleman's expertise in these matters and, indeed, of his position as Chairman of the Committee which wrote the report in the previous Parliament. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will also be aware of that and will, of course, take note—I cannot say more than that—of the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Bearing in mind that Opposition Members constantly preach that the Government do not give enough aid to third-world and poorer countries, may we have another debate on the Rio summit, this time with a little more notice? Conservative Members could then point out that Opposition Members are always in the forefront of requesting the creation of trade barriers, such as the multi-fibre arrangement, against poorer countries, and that the World bank recently calculated that such trade barriers cost the third world more than we give them in aid. Does that not illustrate beautifully that the real nature of socialism is to throw money at problems rather than to let people help themselves?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend makes a good point by emphasising the importance of trade to developing countries, which is often overlooked and which is at least as important as aid, and often more important. That illustrates the occasional contradictory position of Opposition Members who demand more aid and then demand protective trade restrictions, which would undo much of the good. Leaving that aside, as I said in my mini business statement yesterday, I cannot promise a further debate at this stage although there will certainly be a statement after the summit and we can then consider the position in the light of that.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the announcement that there will be a debate next Thursday on science and technology, as it is a subject on which the House has been strangely silent.

May I press the Leader of the House on the subject of departmental Select Committees because many people outside the House wonder why something that is so vital for the scrutiny of Government is being impeded? One would not have thought that the Opposition were causing the delay and therefore, if the Leader of the House is having difficulty with the usual channels, could he not try the unusual channels and let us get on with our business?

Mr. Newton: I have not sought to suggest that there is any cause of difficulty in any place. Difficult issues in relation to the structure of Select Committees and to the way in which they should be set up have to be dealt with, and I hope that it will not be too long before they can be resolved. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no foot-dragging on the Conservative side, and I have no reason to accuse anyone else of it either.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Before we have the Maastricht debate—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry; we have had the Maastricht debate. Before the Maxwell debate next week, could the Leader of the House bring to the attention of the Secretary of State for Social Security the fact that no Government is blameless for not having legislation that protects people's pensions? If the legislation that is likely to be introduced is tight enough to protect people's pensions, can he ask his right hon. Friend to come to the Dispatch Box on Tuesday and give some hope to pensioners? If, with the introduction of good legislation, it is unlikely to happen again, we could set a precedent in that way, and we could

[Mr. Geoffrey Dickens]

give those people hope. Some of my constituents are losing between £10,000 and £29,000 each year of their lives and the Government are their only hope.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend gave me a moment of greater unease than usual with his slip at the beginning of his question. On the rest of his question, I undertake, as I have done on a number of occasions today, to bring his remarks to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): May we have a statement next week about recent reports that the Government are secretly planning to privatise Scotland's water industry? Does the Leader of the House agree that such public asset-stripping would be a national scandal, especially in view of the recent revelation that the chairmen of the privatised water boards in England and Wales are lining their pockets with £20 million worth of perks, and the fact that the Government have no mandate, even by British standards, to privatise Scotland's water, because there was no mention of it in the recent or any previous Tory party election manifesto? Surely such contempt for democracy reinforces the case for a Scottish Parliament.

Mr. Newton: In the interests of keeping the temperature down, I shall simply undertake to draw the hon. Gentleman's question to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): May I commend my right hon. Friend's defence of our Friday debates? Does he agree that they are often effective, in-depth debates and that it is equally difficult to catch Madam Speaker's eye on a Friday as it is on any other day? I thank my right hon. Friend for his announcement of a debate on the common agricultural policy, because it was my request that we should have an early debate on agricultural policy. Presumably, if it were not to be held on Friday, it would have been some time before we could have had that debate.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. When he rose, I wondered whether to advert to a conversation held in informal circumstances that we had earlier in the week. I am grateful for his remarks and glad that I was able to respond to his suggestion and to the widespread demand from other parts of the House.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Given that it seems that the Select Committee on Health will not sit for some time, may we have a debate on what is happening to health service employees? The Leader of the House, with other hon. Members, will have received the report from the Royal College of Nursing about whistle-blowing. He will also be aware that Dr. Chris Chapman has joined other victims of the authoritarian managers now running the health service when he was sacked this week. Is it not time that the House debated exactly what is happening to health service employees who care about standards and patients and who are increasingly victimised if they express those cares?

Mr. Newton: I shall depart, perhaps unwisely, from the emollient frame of mind in which I answered the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) and move into a slightly more aggressive mode. The hon. Lady could conceivably make representations to her hon. Friends on the Front Bench on why we had six days' debate on the Loyal Address without health being raised in any shape or form and why we saw nothing of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook).

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a statement to be made next week to clarify the rumours that the Government have plans to lower the age of consent for homosexuals? It has been rumoured that it will be brought down to as low as 12 years of age, as in Denmark. Will my right hon. Friend take account of the fact that the public's fears need to be allayed on that important issue?

Mr. Newton: I hope that I need not tell my hon. Friend that, in respect of one suggestion to which he referred, he should not believe everything that he reads in the newspapers—if that is what he read.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): For the second time in this Parliament, may I raise the question of the three reports from the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which deal with lobbying, the chairmanship of Committees and the new register? When will we debate those reports on substantive resolutions because 11 hon. Members spent 200 hours working in Committee on them?

Mr. Newton: Clearly, I am not in a position, having announced the business, to promise a debate next week, but, as the hon. Gentleman said, this is the second or third time that the matter has been raised. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has also raised it, and I am aware of the interest in the matter. I am certainly not ignoring it.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): My right hon. Friend has been most generous and helpful to the House in his response to the many interventions about the Maxwell pensions affair. May I stress that it is crucial that the House quickly receives the report from the Securities and Investments Board? It is six months since its inquiries were instigated and we cannot wait much longer because, for each day that passes, more pensioners are losing their entitlement to pension. The new chairman of the SIB, appointed this week, should address his mind to this problem with the greatest urgency.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will realise that the SIB is an independent body and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State cannot dictate to it when it produces its report. However, I will ensure that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has his attention drawn to the point made by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): Does the Leader of the House accept the urgent need for a debate on the water industry in view of the fact that it is not only paying increased dividends to its shareholders and increased salaries to its top executives, but is hugely increasing prices to consumers? There is also clear evidence that it is continually inclined to cut off supplies of water to those who find themselves unable to pay their bills.

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's request. My only comment at this stage is that I sometimes wish that, when points such as that are made, reference was also made to the growing amount of investment in the water industry to meet the increasingly difficult problem of demand.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Was the right hon. Gentleman in his place yesterday when his hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) suggested that Labour Members, including occupants of the Opposition Front Bench, had not spoken of the need for a debate on the Maxwell affair and pensions before the general election? Will the Leader of the House accept that on 5 December I raised the matter and that on 9 December several of my hon. Friends, including the shadow Leader of the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), raised it? I hope that in the debate next week the right hon. Gentleman will make it clear that his hon. Friend was not telling the truth.

Will the right hon. Gentleman also bear in mind that previous Governments of different complexions have found money, when necessary, to pay pensioners who have found themselves in a similar predicament? For example, a Labour Government bailed out Court Line and recently the Tory Government bailed out Barlow Clowes. If the present Government have enough money to bail out Canary wharf, they should be able to find some for the Maxwell pensioners. I trust that we shall be told on Tuesday that they intend to do that.

Mr. Newton: As I observed earlier, the hon. Gentleman is in his usual inimitable form this afternoon, although in perhaps slightly less good humour than he was yesterday.

Mr. Skinner: That is not surprising.

Mr. Newton: We should certainly miss him if he were not there.

Mr. Kirkwood: So would we!

Mr. Newton: I cannot speak for the Liberal Bench.

Leaving aside the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, I was in the House yesterday and noted the exchanges that took place between my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and the shadow Leader of the House. I cannot say that I have done further detailed investigation of *Hansard* since, though I note the point the hon. Gentleman makes.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the anxiety felt by 200 constituents of mine who are likely to lose their pensions because of unsatisfactory answers given by the Prime Minister on the Thursday before the recess, when he sought refuge by attempting to give them consolation over the way in which they would receive the guaranteed minimum pension? Is he further aware that for the pensioners in my constituency that will come to the "generous" sum of £6·76 a week, hardly enough to buy a pot of marmalade? Will the Leader of the House ensure that when the pensioners come to see us on Monday, and in the debate on Tuesday, assurances will be given not only about the review, which is important, but to the effect that they will not lose the money that is essential to keep their households together? That is the crunch in the matter.

Mr. Newton: I acknowledge the obvious intended thrust of the hon. Lady's question and shall draw that, too, to the attention of my right hon. Friend. I would observe, as a former social security Minister, that it is not possible to quote a figure for the guaranteed minimum pension —or, indeed, for the pension entitlement under Maxwell pension schemes—for any individual pensioner because it depends on the contribution record and period over which contributions were made.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the two Questions on the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the Company and Business Names (Amendment) Regulations 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 1196) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Dioxins) (England) (No. 2) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 1274) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Andrew MacKay.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

4.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members may recognise the Bill as being essentially the same as a private Member's Bill introduced in another place in the previous Session by my noble Friend the Baroness Brigstocke. That Bill gained all-party support but failed to complete all its stages here before dissolution. I acknowledge the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) to get the Bill through on that occasion. It is unfortunate that the Bill did not quite make it before dissolution, because the need for it remains.

Today's Bill, which successfully completed all its stages in another place after a wide-ranging and interesting debate, provides for a minor but vital technical amendment to section 42(2) of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Hon. Members will be aware that Government policy on care in the community has recently been set out in the White Paper "Caring for People" and in part II of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. The policy is based on two principles—first, that the majority of people want to remain in their own homes or in a homely environment for as long as possible and, secondly, that the needs of any two people can differ, so individual problems require individual solutions.

Our policy puts the emphasis of care where it should rightly be—on the proper assessment of the individual needs of the users of services and on the design of a package of care that meets those needs.

The White Paper's approach is based on giving local authorities the freedom and flexibility to develop effective individual solutions for the provision of services and support that frail, elderly, vulnerable or disabled people need. The aim is to enable those people to live as full and independent a life as possible.

That approach reflects the transformation of attitudes towards how that group of people should be looked after which has occurred during the last quarter of a century. Individuals, families, volunteers, professionals, campaigners and politicians from all sides have come to recognise the shortcomings of institutional environments and the greater potential and fulfilment which people enjoy when living in, contributing to and being supported by the community.

The White Paper is important, but it is merely one more step along a well-trodden road. It needs to be seen in that context, and its significance must be neither over nor under-estimated. Its objectives include, first, promoting the development of domiciliary, day and respite services to enable people to live in their own homes where that is practicable and desirable; secondly, ensuring that practical support for carers is made a high priority; thirdly, ensuring proper assessment of need and care management; and, fourthly, promoting the development of a flourishing independent sector alongside good quality public provision.

Implementation of that policy is well under way. From April 1991 social services departments were required to introduce inspection units and complaints procedures and we introduced new specific grants to help particular groups. From April 1992, authorities were required to produce and publish community care plans. From April 1993, local authorities take on full responsibility for arranging all social care services.

That responsibility will include the provision of services such as home helps, home care assistants and day care to support people in their own homes, and making arrangements for residential and nursing home care for those who are no longer able nor wish to remain in their own homes. Individual needs will be assessed and a package of care designed and managed by the local authority.

The full implementation of all community care objectives involves a continuing process that goes on for many years. Not for nothing was the White Paper called "Caring for People—Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond".

The Bill is concerned with the ability of local authorities to make arrangements for residential accommodation across a range of organisations and does not touch on domiciliary or nursing home care.

Hon. Members will be aware that there is a range of types of residential accommodation currently available, for example, residential care homes, group homes, and hostels of all types. They may be managed by local authorities, voluntary or commercial organisations, and they cater for varying types of need and degrees of dependency. Some provide only bed and board, others help with supportive or personal care. Those that offer personal care as well as board are required to register with the local authority under the Registered Homes Act 1984, unless they are specifically exempted from so doing.

At present, local authorities provide hostel accomodation and other forms of residential care either directly or through the independent sector—voluntary or commercial—under the National Assistance Act 1948 and paragraph 2(1)*(a)* of schedule 8 to the National Health Service Act 1977.

The Government attached great importance to retaining and extending the flexibility that local authorities have to provide a range of residential accommodation to suit the varying needs of the individuals who go to them for care. In all the guidance that we put out, we stressed to local authorities the need to be flexible. Local circumstances will dictate the best balance between different types of arrangement, but we have emphasised that individuals should have genuine choice over the services that they receive.

That means choice not only of the type of service, but of its provider. The independent sector—both voluntary and private—plays an important part in residential care at the moment. We are determined that that will continue, and to encourage greater involvement of the independent sector in non-residential care.

A mixed economy of care is the way to ensure choice, stimulate quality, and secure the best value for money. Authorities should begin to move away from the role of sole provider to the role of enabler and facilitator. The independent sector is a resource that must not be allowed

to lie unused. Most authorities know that, and are beginning to respond to their new challenges. The purchaser provider model, which is delivering great benefits within the national health service, may usefully be emulated in that respect by local authorities.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): Is my hon. Friend the Minister satisfied that the range and quality of care that will be offered by the voluntary and private sector will be such that a satisfactory environment will be provided for those who, at a time of poor health or increasing age, turn to local authorities to provide accommodation?

Mr. Yeo: Yes, I am more than satisfied. There is overwhelming evidence that the involvement of the voluntary sector and, more recently, of the private sector in residential and, to some extent, non-residential care—we want to encourage more of that—is a key influence in raising standards. The independent sector is only able to survive and prosper by offering local authorities and, through them, the individuals who need support a standard of provision that is not only as good as that provided by local authorities but better, in many cases.

It is a time-honoured tradition in this country for the voluntary sector in particular to pioneer standards of service with which the statutory agencies eventually catch up, so that they become available to all. I see the voluntary sector as a very benign influence in that whole process.

However, a problem has arisen that necessitates this Bill. From April 1993, when the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 is fully in force, paragraph 2(1)*(a)* of schedule 8 to the National Health Service Act 1977 will be repealed, and section 26 of the National Assistance Act 1948 will be amended by section 42(2) of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. It was the Government's intention that the flexibility that local authorities currently have under the 1977 and 1948 Acts be retained.

Unfortunately, section 42(2) of the 1990 Act inadvertently curtailed that flexibility, particularly with respect to local authorities making arrangements with independent sector residential accommodation, which does not require to be registered under the Registered Homes Act 1984. It puts at risk the use by local authorities of a range of independent sector providers including hostels, and notably the Abbeyfield Society. That society has about 1,000 homes providing accommodation for elderly people who do not require personal care, as defined in the Registered Homes Act 1984, but domestic help and the provision of meals in a small and homely residential setting.

Most Abbeyfield homes are family-sized houses where seven to nine elderly people have their own bed-sitting rooms. Residents have normally moved from their own homes nearby. They furnish their own rooms with their treasured possessions; they lead their own lives and come together for the main meals of the day, which are prepared by the resident housekeeper. That way of life provides a balance of privacy and companionship that can be ideal for many elderly people.

People are individuals and have individual needs, and as I have said, the new community care arrangements are intended to allow local authorities to respond more effectively to those needs. I am sure that the House will agree that it would be most regrettable if their flexibility to do so were curtailed by the loss of powers to make arrangements with organisations like the Abbeyfield Society.

The Bill remedies the problem by replacing section 42(2) of the NHSCC Act 1990, thus restoring to local authorities the powers that they now have to make full use of the independent sector but would otherwise lose in April 1993 when the Act comes into force. The Bill makes a minor but vitally important technical change to the legislation, without making any policy changes; it simply maintains the status quo.

The substance of clause 1 restores to local authorities the ability to make arrangements for residential accommodation with the independent sector in premises neither registrable under the Registered Homes Act 1984 nor exempt from registration. It restores the flexibility to make arrangements with various independent-sector organisations for residential accommodation, as well as maintaining the rest of the arrangements found in section 42(2) of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. Clause 2 provides for the short title, commencement and extent.

I hope that the House will agree that the Bill deals with a technical problem that arises from section 42(2) of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, and remedies it so that hostels and societies like Abbeyfield are not put at risk.

4.21 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I welcome the Minister to his new post, and thank him for giving a fairly wide introduction to a fairly narrow Bill. In doing so, he has enabled the House to examine some of the wider community care issues. We are extremely grateful both for the example given by the Minister and for your acceptance of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Given the wide-ranging remarks that the Minister made at the beginning of his speech, I hoped that he would take the opportunity to say a little more about what is in prospect for April 1993. It would have been useful to hear a clear, unambiguous reaffirmation that the community care reforms would indeed go ahead at that time. That is, in fact, a requirement, and I shall be happy to give way if the Secretary of State or any of the other Ministers wishes to intervene on the subject.

I feel that a Minister should clarify recent reports that Health Department officials have considered aborting the reforms. Those reports have not been contradicted so far, and they have sent shock waves through local authorities and the voluntary and private sectors, which need to know where they will stand next year. There can be no excuse for further delay or lack of readiness on the Department's part—unless, that is, the Government continue to refuse to talk about the financial arrangements. That in itself leads to doubt, which is only multiplied by the reports that I have mentioned. It would be helpful if this unexpected debate could be used to clear up that doubt; there is still plenty of time to do so.

The Government could at least say something about financial commitments to local authorities: for instance, a commitment that the financial arrangements will at least take account of the shortfall in income support between charges to residents and the benefits available. That shortfall is, after all, required to be made good by charity—by which I mean registered charities—and also by

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

relatives of people in care, some of whom are themselves receiving social security benefits. Such doubts and difficulties really must be cleared up. The implementation of the legislation has been delayed; following the general election, there can be no further excuse for Ministers not to make their position clear.

The difficulty of the shortfall led to what I consider an immoral two-tier charging system in some care-away-from-home establishments. Residents with assets—usually the proceeds of the former family home—who can therefore fund themselves for a few years until their assets run out are charged between £40 and £90 a week more than other residents so that the proprietors can balance the books. That is immoral, but Ministers never refer to that cross-subsidy.

Ministers cannot stay silent about the problem much longer. The Government must give a commitment—if not now then in Committee—that the community care funding arrangements for each local authority will be specific so that the authority can operate as an enabler and an organiser, and certainly only as a partial provider of services. Then we shall all know what the arrangements are. There will then be some accountability and a lessening of the risk that the money will be diverted to other, I have no doubt, useful purposes. There must be accountability at both central Government level and local authority level.

This Second Reading debate provides a welcome opportunity for the House to address these issues. This is a small Bill, though it is somewhat longer than the Maastricht Bill. We know, therefore, that there can be wide debates on small Bills. The House is trying to promote a policy of comprehensive community care which allows people to make informed choices regarding options about which they have been consulted. It is therefore necessary to have a flexible system which takes into account a variety of human networks and circumstances. A problem in one area has major ramifications elsewhere for services and choice. If we do not pass the Bill, people who cannot go into residential accommodation of this kind will be forced into unsuitable residential or nursing care. Some may even be forced to stay, unsuitably, in their own homes. Such a comprehensive system, based on variety and meeting people's needs at a personal level, means that the rest of the system must be examined, even when one is considering what appears to be a fairly narrow point.

However brief this debate on community care may be, the subject will be debated more today than it was ever debated during the general election campaign. Up to 6 million adults who are disabled or frail are affected, and anything up to 5 million or 6 million carers who have to undertake varying degrees of care are also affected, but their needs were completely passed by during the general election campaign. It may be argued that 80 or 90 per cent. of community care policy is common to all the parties, but that is no excuse for silence on a fundamental issue which affects people at a personal level. When it came to public debate during the general election campaign, community care was almost a no-go area. I have already said that there is a good deal of common ground between the parties, but that is no excuse for silence.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley) *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: I was about to mention the Secretary of State and I was probably about to mention the very point that she wishes to make. I am very pleased that the Secretary of State, whom I congratulate on her appointment, is in the Chamber.

I well remember Friday 28 February of this year when my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and I launched the Labour party's policy paper, "Better Community Care". Traffic in London was disrupted by bombs. I took part in a recorded interview with the Secretary of State in which we discussed community care policy. That recording for the BBC was made in the middle of that Friday morning. It was intended for "The World at One", but the recording was not broadcast because we did not argue with one another. That says more about how the BBC tries to manipulate political debate and the political process in this country than it does about my views, the Secretary of State's views, or the views of the Labour party and the Conservative party. If we do not argue, the BBC does not want to be involved, even though community care policy affects millions of our fellow citizens. I have waited quite a while to get that off my chest, and today's debate has provided me with a good opportunity to do so.

The Bill, to which I must refer from time to time, affects residential accommodation as opposed to residential care. It highlights the fact that the success of a comprehensive community care policy rests as much on housing and transport policies as on policies for health and social services. One cannot construct a comprehensive community care policy which meets the individual needs of our fellow citizens unless housing policy is an integral part of it.

The Bill touches on housing policy and the availability of housing of a specialist type. Whether we are talking about availability or choice in housing or aids and adaptations within the home, the aim must be for those who have to leave their home for a care-away-from-home establishment to succeed in restoring a degree of independence and be able to return to their own home. One should not have to end up in residential accommodation, even of the sort provided for in the Bill. There must be an aim to restore independent living. The thousands of stroke patients in this country will testify to that. They know the importance of the rehabilitation process to help them become as independent as possible. It should not be a one-way process; there must be the possibility of returning home. That is why housing policy is so crucial to the success of a comprehensive community care system.

The Bill is concerned essentially with residential accommodation provided by the voluntary and private sectors. The Labour party document to which I referred earlier makes it clear, without qualification, that we see a comprehensive community care policy as an ideology-free zone. Those who rely on community care services are not concerned about who provides that service so long as it is reliable and of good quality. The users are not over-preoccupied with the debate which has rightly gone on in the House about the split between purchasers and providers. One person may be the recipient of a service delivered by the local authority, the voluntary sector and elements of the private sector. Users do not need to know what sector it is that turns up at different times of the day. They want a seamless service. However, the argument about the split between purchaser and provider is a major

policy issue. It is a policy argument that we have had, and no doubt will continue to have, in the House. The users want to be treated as human beings.

Service provision may sometimes be very simple. It may sometimes be the provision of gadgets, aids and adaptations rather than a service. It is better to provide the kitchen aids and adaptations to enable people to cook their own food than for them to have to rely on meals on wheels. The former provides independence while the latter leads to dependence. If it is possible for people to cook their own food, that should be the priority because, by and large, that is what the user will want. Most people do not want care; they want a bit of help to enable them to exist and flower as independently as possible and to live as full a life as possible.

If we can aim to provide a seamless service, it will overcome many of the difficulties experienced by those who need the service, by hon. Members and by social workers. It is not easy to achieve that aim. There are good grounds for believing that if we do not get the planning and finances right, we shall not be able to achieve it from April next year, even with all the planning that has taken place.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the important issues in achieving independence for people living at home is that the bureaucracy involved in bringing about improvements and aid in the home must be kept to a minimum? Visits by white collar staff to ascertain what is needed and how it is to be done often occur on too many occasions and take too long when all that is needed is a workman who can do the job quickly.

Mr. Rooker: I could not agree more, and I shall offer a solution which appears in policy documents published by the Labour party in February. I cannot understand why a qualified social worker or district nurse, who is at the sharp end of the problem, cannot order a second stair rail instead of the patient having to wait six months for a scarce occupational therapist to place an order. Why should not the social worker or district nurse order the minimum aids and adaptations which are required urgently to prevent further accidents, which in turn put further pressure on the NHS? I cannot understand that bureaucracy. We want trained occupational therapists for specialist work, but following, say, a stroke or the early diagnosis of Parkinson's disease, the simple aids—the handyman's aids—should be provided on the say-so of a qualified social worker or district nurse; they are at the sharp end because they are the first people to be involved.

The philosophy of providing a seamless service, not differentiating between the sectors, underpins the Labour party's desire to implement the original intentions of the Griffiths report. There is a good deal of policy agreement across the House, but there are some policy differences. I am not criticising any Minister as all are new to their tasks, but the Government still have not adopted the Griffiths recommendation that a Minister in the Department of Health should have key responsibility across other Departments because at least four Departments—Health, Environment, Transport and Social Security—are involved. We should enhance the role of the Department of Health in this aspect of policy. As Ministers settle to their tasks, they may consider Labour policy and pick out some good ideas. We shall not criticise them for doing so—we shall just remind them of what they are doing.

I referred earlier to the ring-fencing of funds. It is crucial that local authorities are aware of funds in advance. A Minister should be responsible for a specific sum of money which can be traced. Those tax pounds should be traced from the House through the system to the user so that we can ensure value for money and that none of the money is diverted for repairing roads, roofs or our leaking and crumbling schools. Those are all worthy causes, but the House will have voted that money for community care.

The Griffiths report made it clear that it is necessary to ring-fence such money, and we believe that it should be ring-fenced for at least the lifetime of the Parliament. The quid pro quo is that local government must ring-fence its share as well. Too often the funds of social service committees have been raided by other local government committees.

We shall continue to press—we shall be able to do so better when the Government make their policy clearer—for a financial regime which is as fair as possible between the sectors so that the availability of finance in one sector and not in another does not force people into a choice of care which may not necessarily meet their needs. That is exactly what has happened in the past few years, when income support has been available for one sector but not for others. There must be fairness—level playing field is a term that we understand, but viewers may not—in multi-sector provision. A seamless service is distorted if the financial arrangements are not fair between the sectors.

The Bill covers the part of community care policy which the Labour party document referred to as care away from home. There are many aspects of care away from home, and I set out briefly some of the general principles which might be helpful for the providers as it is a matter for a bipartisan approach. Shadow Ministers shuffle off or shuffle around after elections, as do Government Ministers, but by and large our principles do not change. The Under-Secretary of State may smile at that, but it is an important point because the different sectors need to make investment plans beyond the lifetime of a Parliament. Finance is important for the voluntary sector, for local government and especially for the private sector; they need a fair degree of stability and to know the parties' positions. I shall make it clear what our principles were and are, and they will not change merely because faces may change. That fact has been recognised by the different sectors and they have found it helpful.

The Bill affects part of care away from home—residential accommodation as opposed even to residential care. Such forms of care should not be seen as a problem or failure of community care because, as the Minister said, they are an integral part of a comprehensive system of community care. They will include a variety of circumstances: housing with various degrees of independence, such as those covered in the Bill; group homes, also partly covered by the Bill; residential and nursing homes; and, in some parts of the country, village communities and elderly persons' foster schemes in individual homes such as those for young people.

The circumstances of people needing care away from home will vary from full-time nursing care to the minimalist provision involved in the care covered in the Bill. Making sure that the variety of human needs and

[Mr. Rooker]

networks is covered requires a great deal of flexibility in housing and social policy—far more than has hitherto been shown by the Government.

The Labour party sees merit in a variety of organisational arrangements for care away from home. That variety not only assists in creating real choice and in meeting people's needs, which change in time, but avoids the trap of the monopoly provision of care. This is where I strike a note of discord with the Government, who sometimes appear to be actively working towards monopoly provision by the private sector while the Labour party is opposed to monopoly provision by any one sector. The public sector, the voluntary sector and the private sector all have a role to play and a contribution to make, either independently or in partnership on projects and packages. However, the choice should not be a maze for the consumer.

More attention must be given to information and guides to services in an easily accessible and understandable form. Information must be better than that offered by one London borough, which must remain nameless, which earlier this year advised a friend of mine desperately seeking information about respite care to "look in the Yellow Pages." Hearing that in 1992 from a social services authority shows clearly that a great deal of the modern thinking in the House has completely passed that authority by. However, there are also good model local authorities of all political persuasions which have gone out of their way to provide easily accessible guides and information on all services in their area and which are taking on board their enabling role.

Labour insists that all sectors providing care away from home are treated equally for quality assessment purposes because that is the ballpoint for the user. We are not prepared to allow any distinctions to be made with regard to quality measures and the rights to be enjoyed by residents, staff or carers based on the ownership, size or location of an establishment. It naturally follows that we shall not seek to play off one sector against another or to single out a whole sector for praise or blame on the basis of a few good or bad examples. That would send a wrong signal to the providers and, what is more, to the families of the people in care away from home. That is the problem which causes difficulty. It would also send the wrong signal to the staff employed in the establishments.

The consumers or users of the service must come first, whether or not they are the budget holders, and, by and large, the local authority will be the budget holder for most people. That is not a cliché or a new found policy. I was once taken to task for quoting Labour party policy which I was told was very old, but I said that it was still current. We said that we were

"committed to tip the scales back in favour of the individual and away from public and private concentrations of power."

That suits community care policy and, indeed, any other aspect of policy. It has been our policy since 1976. I carry that cutting around constantly in my wallet and I am accused of abusing it in relation to different aspects of policy, but we meant what we said. It is time, in every aspect of policy, to tip the scales back in favour of the individual and away from concentrations of power, whether public or private, but it is especially important that that point is taken on board in community care policy.

I do not want to introduce a note of discord, but I did not have the opportunity to raise certain points during the general election campaign. One point of particular importance, bearing in mind the contents of the Bill, is that the requirement for care-away-from-home establishments will mushroom in the next decade. We have been through the very elderly persons explosion. We must enable people to remain in their own homes if that is their choice. We must not force them to stay in their homes, but if they choose to do so we must move heaven and earth and do all that is humanly possible to facilitate that. However, even with that as a policy objective and with the best will in the world, with imagination, initiative and enterprise, there will be increased demand for care-away-from-home establishments because, for example, of that great scourge of the late 20th century—loneliness.

Sometimes people want to leave their own homes after the loss of a partner or loved one. There may be no obvious medical or physical reason for them to leave, but they will have lost the companionship and perhaps cannot exist on their own. That has happened many thousands of times, and the problem will not go away, so there will be increased need for care-away-from-home establishments provided on a multi-sector basis.

We believe that the ownership of such establishments should be made absolutely clear in all brochures, explanatory details and contracts offered to local authorities or individuals. We also believe that if any employees, including general practitioners and consultants in the NHS or the local authority, have any financial interest in any care-away-from-home establishment in their employing authority or in any adjacent area, it should be transparent in a public register of interests. Attention should also be drawn to the register in material issued by the homes involved.

We do not say that such interests should not exist. If we are to have a comprehensive community care system with scope for choice and with a variety of multi-sector provision, we must encourage people to make the best use of their talent, expertise and training. We are not opposed to care professionals having such interests, provided that the interests are registered and transparent. Quality care demands nothing less from professional people, and such a move would be of help right through the system. The Government must deal with that issue, but it will not be made possible except by way of amendments which I have not yet fully considered.

We must return to the issue because it requires primary legislation. I hope that the Minister will take the point on board in the spirit in which it is made—not in any attacking, denigrating way, but as a means of avoiding problems in the future. If the policy is to be a success and meet the needs of our fellow citizens as users, we can do no less than examine that aspect of policy.

4.49 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): I thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health for his helpful response to my intervention. He satisfied my prime concern, which was that we were not looking simply at the range of accommodation that will be available for placements by local authorities but were attempting to ensure that accommodation of sufficient quality will be available so that placements can be the correct ones.

I found myself in almost full agreement with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who drew attention to the second point that I would like to make. Because we are discussing not long-term placements in nursing homes or registered care homes but people who may have relatively short-term problems, or problems—such as mental disabilities—which may eventually allow them to return to the community, it is essential that we note that the title of the Bill places community care before residential accommodation. The need for the accommodation arises out of a requirement for care. It is not somewhere to put people out of the way so that they can be conveniently forgotten. Rather they are placed there because that is the most suitable place in which the community can show its commitment to care for them. If in future they have the opportunity to return to some other form of accommodation—their own home, perhaps, or some other form of residential accommodation such as warden-assisted flats—that would be encouraged.

I was pleased that the Minister gave us an assurance that there would be accommodation of the quality required. That is a measure of the success of such accommodation. I have recently dealt with the case of a lady who, after undergoing heroic surgery for cancer, was placed first in a nursing home and then—after a remarkable recovery, considering the fact that she was elderly—she was able to move gradually back into other accommodation, so that she is now virtually independent, in a flat of her own. Surely that is the measure of the community care which everyone in the House would like to see.

I question what the hon. Member for Perry Barr said about differential charges. I was not sure whether, in suggesting that people who can pay are being made to pay more, he was criticising the proprietors of residential accommodation for having a range of charges within their establishments. If so, it was not a very fair criticism. After all, most homes offer a range of quality of accommodation—single rooms, or larger rooms, for example, for those who would prefer them.

Mr. Rooker: I made the point exactly as I intended to. In many areas, especially in nursing homes, a different charge is made for exactly the same level of service, depending on whether people are self-funded—that is, not in receipt of income support. That is immoral because it is a cross-subsidy from one resident to another, to make up a shortfall. The homes could not cope without it. If they did not have a mix including self-funded people, whom they charge more than they charge people on income support, they would close. That is the fault of the Government's refusal to organise their social security policy properly.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that explanation. He may recall that in the previous Parliament I joined him and many of his hon. Friends in the Division Lobbies on that issue, so there is no great disagreement between us there—except that I still wish to defend owners and organisers who allow people whom they took on when they had private funds to stay in their highly expensive accommodation long after those funds have run out and they can obtain only the amount payable in income support. Credit should be given to such owners, who do not seek to remove people when their private funds have run out—but now I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will draw my attention to the fact that we are not discussing registered accommodation or nursing homes this afternoon.

I believe that I shall have the support of Members on both sides of the House when I say that it is important that community care should contain the widest possible range and variety so as to be able to meet the needs of individuals. Social services departments should continue to be involved, as should other local authority bodies and agencies, after accommodation has been found. There should be a continuing commitment to the personal care and development of individuals. However slow that may be—in the case, for example, of people with serious handicaps—there should still be a continuing commitment to the development of the individual, not just to his or her placement.

The Bill, modest though it is, gives local authorities a wider choice, and I believe that they will seize the opportunity to ensure that they provide carefully selected and progressive accommodation to suit the requirements of each individual who turns to them for assistance.

4.56 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I make it clear at the outset that I have no wish to obstruct the progress of the Bill. I certainly support its aims, and I am aware of the excellent work undertaken by some of the establishments whose functioning it will affect. There is an Abbeyfield Society establishment in my constituency, and the model that Abbeyfield offers should be actively encouraged. My comments will make it apparent that I wish us to have a detailed debate on the measure, as opposed to allowing it to go through on the nod, as yesterday's business statement led me to assume was the original intention. I was worried to see that the Bill was expected to go through all its stages today, and I welcome the fact that the Government have conceded the Standing Committee stage. That Committee stage may well be brief—there is no need to obstruct the Bill's progress—but I feel that there are issues which we should debate.

The Bill gives us the opportunity to discuss the current community care situation in the run-up to April next year, and the chance to pick up a range of issues which were missed when the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 was passed. I hope that the Government will listen to some of the suggestions made today, and perhaps add provisions to the Bill before the Committee stage.

I listened carefully to the Under-Secretary of State's opening speech—and, personally, I wish him well in his new role. I know that his background is relevant to the work that he is now undertaking. But I was worried because what he said made it appear that he and the Government were oblivious to what many people believe is a crisis in community care in the run-up to 1 April next year—a crisis that will not be resolved by the changes which it is proposed will take place on that date.

The Government's strategy on community care has been clear for many years: leave it to the market. Now we are picking up the pieces. The market has organised what is in the interests of the market rather than those of the care consumer. There is now a huge explosion in one form of care—private institutional care—way above and beyond any reasonable estimate of the demand caused by the increasing number of elderly and very elderly people.

[Mr. David Hinchliffe]

What concerns me is that, when the Government refer to "community care", they actually mean private institutional care. That is the central theme of their belief in community care. I do not believe that institutional care is community care. Community care is care in the community and not care away from the community. The Opposition have restated that point because it is a fundamental difference between the Government and the Opposition.

Let us consider what has happened in relation to funding the private institutional care sector since 1981. I find it interesting that the Government boast about the amount they have put into private institutional care through the income support system. In 1981, the amount invested in private care through supplementary benefit was about £10 million a year. In the past financial year, the amount invested was about £2 billion—a huge amount —which was paid through income support to people in private institutional care. The total figure invested by the Government through income support to people in private institutional care since 1981 comes to about £9 billion. Rather than boasting about that figure or being proud of it, the Government should be ashamed that so much money is being invested in institutionalising people in this day and age.

To make matters worse, alongside the investment of £9 billion through income support, one must consider the pattern of funding through the revenue support grant system to local authority social services. Figures available from the Library show that about £6 billion of RSG funding to local authority social services has been removed by reductions in RSG during the same period. The Government are clearly determined to move money away from preventive domiciliary services into institutional care. That is a nonsensical strategy which should be reversed as a matter of urgency. The Government have pulled the rug out from under the local authorities' ability to fund domiciliary care such as home helps, meals-on-wheels, respite care, day care and a range of other services which are geared to enabling people and their carers to remain in the community. That strategy should be exposed, and I urge the Minister to look afresh at the way in which the Government are acting.

We are debating an issue which is not only political but which involves basic human rights issues of how we treat elderly and disabled people. It is a basic human right to allow people to remain in independent or semi-independent living in the community if they and their carers so wish. The Government are determined to remove that right from people and they should be ashamed of their record in that respect. Compared with similar countries in Europe and elsewhere, in Britain far more elderly and disabled people are institutionalised than should be the case. We should consider that position very seriously and none of us should be proud of it.

As other hon. Members have said, we should consider afresh the issue of the financial difficulties facing vast numbers of elderly disabled people who cannot afford to pay for the private institutional care they receive at present —an issue that affects every hon. Member who has constituents in private care homes. It is scandalous that there are people in every constituency who have to use their personal allowances to pay for their care. Some elderly people do not have a spare penny to spend on a hair-do, on new underwear or even on a bag of sweets. That is profoundly unacceptable in this day and age and the Government should be ashamed of it.

We are told that April 1993 will change everything—if April 1993 ever happens. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said, there are strong rumours that April 1993 may not arrive and that there may be a second deferral of the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. I should be grateful for further clarification from the Minister. I served in Committee on the National Health Service and Community Care Bill and I believe that April 1993 will be a false dawn. It is being held up as something that will suddenly cure all the ills in community care, but I do not believe that that will happen.

Assessment, care management and community care plans are all excellent and desirable provisions which were supported by the Opposition. However, assessment is nonsense when social workers cannot assess for alternatives to institutional care. With the huge explosion in private market care, the Government have established a bias towards institutional care. To ensure that we have an even playing field and a choice of services, we desperately need a massive redirection of funding away from the private institutional sector into alternatives to institutional care, whether public, private, voluntary or other, to enable people when they are assessed to have a genuine choice to remain independent and to stay out of care. Assessment may not have the impact that many people, including people in my own party, assume that it will have after April 1993.

There are huge gaps in the Bill and in the 1990 Act in relation to the rights of people in a care setting, whether private nursing homes, residential care homes, local authority homes or whatever. It is important for the Government, following important reports such as the Wagner report, the "Home Life" recommendations and reports from organisations such as Counsel and Care, which suggest that things are not well in relation to the rights of residents in many care homes, both in the private and public sectors, to address the issues, whether in the Bill or in separate legislation. The Government should bring into statute clear requirements protecting the rights of people in care.

We shall now have the opportunity to consider some of those requirements in Committee, but there are issues which we should consider as a matter of urgency and which could be addressed in the Bill. One issue is the right to rehabilitation. When we debated the 1990 Act in Committee—several of my hon. Friends served on that Committee—we discussed the assessment process which will come into operation after April 1993. However, once a person is placed in institutional care, there are no review procedures. Anyone who has worked with elderly people or who knows of cases of elderly people knows that a person's circumstances can change in a week, in a month or in six months, and that they may be completely different from when that person was initially assessed. It is essential that we introduce some form of reassessment and review for people who are in care homes to give them the opportunity of rehabilitation and actively to encourage rehabilitation.

People in the private sector are now worried that some of the homes may not be full and that they may not be able to run at a profit. What incentive is there for private care

home owners to rehabilitate a resident and to work to get that resident back in the community if by doing so they put themselves into financial difficulties which may affect the viability of the homes? The Government's system works completely against rehabilitation and returning people to the community. People must address that point regardless of their politics. It is a human rights issue which we have overlooked and which needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Another issue which ties in is the way in which the existing system actively encourages dependence in care—indeed, it actively rewards dependence. The Department's system of monitoring people who move from receiving income support payments for care to income support payments for nursing home care—a significantly increased amount which the Government have introduced—involves no monitoring of whether people need that additional form of care or whether they are receiving it. There is no system of checking whether that care is needed or is being given. That is a scandalous misuse of public resources.

I can give the Minister examples of individual cases. People have been shunted into nursing care when they do not need it. The system encourages dependence, and we must urgently address that problem.

Other matters that we need to consider include the right to privacy. The Counsel and Care report last year pointed out that people cannot go to the toilet in private, cannot bathe in private, and cannot have their own bedrooms. I have been to a home in which elderly ladies were bathed alongside each other. The system was two baths side by side, with a lady sitting in each bath, and two members of staff between them. The argument was that that was a quicker way of dealing with all those who had to be bathed. Anyway, they said, it did not matter because those old people were confused, so they were not embarrassed by being bathed in front of each other. That is unacceptable. In case anyone thinks that I am anti-private sector, that happened in a local authority home. I accept that it was a few years ago, but it happened, certainly within the past five years.

Before I was elected to this place, I went to a private care home in my constituency. Seven people were crammed into one bedroom. In this day and age that is completely unacceptable. The issues of privacy and rights within care must be addressed by the Government. We must consider security of tenure and also people's rights. There are few rights for people who are asked to pay because they cannot afford their fees. There is no system to ensure that they are properly looked after. Vulnerable elderly people worry about being out on the streets. I accept that there are care home owners—I know of some in west Yorkshire—who are subsidising people through their own charity and good will. However, we know of people in west Yorkshire who have been evicted and of people who have moved downmarket. That is unacceptable when people in their 80s and 90s are vulnerable, unhappy and unaware of what is happening.

The Government must put into statute some of the requirements in their "Home Life" document. It is nonsense to have recommendations in "Home Life" and not back them by statutory provision. It weakens the position of the inspectorate which is to monitor and register homes when there is no backbone to the desirable points in "Home Life".

I hope that those issues will be addressed by amendments to the Bill. Opposition Members have no desire to block the Bill, but it is important to debate some of the human rights issues that are affected by such legislation. The Government should be ashamed of their record on community care. What we have seen over the past decade or more in the care of elderly people is wrong. It is about time we had a change of course. The Minister starts his job with a clean sheet. I hope that he will look at the matter afresh. The Bill provides the opportunity significantly to solve some of the problems to which I have referred and to which, no doubt, my hon. Friends will refer.

5.12 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I always enjoy listening to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), who speaks with vigour, enthusiasm and, of course, a knowledge born of his experience. His speech seemed to be a rather strong advocacy of the Government's legislation. He urged them to do exactly what the legislation is intended to do. He complained that too many people are in institutions and could be better looked after in their own homes. That is precisely the object of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. He said that, in the past, we have not given sufficient help to carers. Again, that is very much the philosophy of the Act, the White Paper, and the way in which local authorities are endeavouring to implement the legislation. The hon. Gentleman pleaded for a redirection of resources. That is precisely what the legislation is all about, and it is exactly what we hope will happen.

I enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who complained that community care did not feature much in the election campaign. However, in his anecdote he demonstrated the reason for that. As has been and will be evident in the debate, this is not a matter of party political controversy. Even differences in the ways in which we reach the ends are a good deal fewer than they were a couple of years ago when we discussed such matters in Committee.

Like the hon. Gentleman, I have an Abbeyfield home in my constituency. If Abbeyfield had been left out of the legislation, we would have been astonished and would have endeavoured to put the matter right straight away. One accepts that, expert though parliamentary draftsmen are, errors and omissions sometimes occur, and steps must be taken to put matters right. That is exactly what the Bill is intended to do. I hope that it will have a rapid passage through the House.

Hon. Members tend to spend many hours in the mornings, afternoons and sometimes nights considering Bills in Committee until, finally, on Third Reading we consider that our job is done, as indeed may be the case. But that is when the work starts. Hon. Members who have followed the implementation of the Children Act 1989, for example, and now the community care part of the 1990 Act realise how much work has been going on within Government Departments and locally in implementing that Act.

There has been a steady stream of guidance from the Department to local authorities on a range of matters within the Act and on how it should be implemented. Local authorities have been doing much work in compiling their care plans, all of which were submitted to the Department by 1 April and are now being examined.

[Mr. Roger Sims]

Authorities have been spurred on to increase their range of services. Of course, the philosophy behind the Act is that a range of services should be available and that it should be the responsibility of local authorities to ensure that they are provided, to make assessments and to make care packages. Whether care packages are available within local authority services, within the voluntary sector or within a mixture of sectors will depend on each case and on the local facilities available.

As the hon. Member for Perry Barr said, there has been a lack of guidance on finance. There has been virtually no guidance on the financing of community care. Hon. Members will recall that assurances on resources were requested time and again when the 1990 Act was being considered. The then Minister assured us time and again that resources would be available to ensure that the Act was fully implemented. That Minister is now the Secretary of State, and we can be sure that those promises will be fulfilled.

In attending local conferences on the implementation of community care, I have been struck by the enthusiasm to get on with the job and with the widespread concern about whether resources will be available, and in particular about what they will be. That depends not only on the Department of Health but on the Treasury and the DSS. It is important that, as soon as possible, we have clarification of the mechanics of shifting what, until now, has been the income support element under the DSS and how it will be made available to local authorities. In future, if, after assessment, an elderly or handicapped person—it may even be a child—is to go into a residential home, the cost is to be met by the local authority from funds that previously would have come from the Department of Social Security as part of income support. What is that figure to be? On what basis is it to be formulated? Surely discussions have been going on for a couple of years on that. It must be possible to give local authorities an idea what the figure will be.

Of course, one accepts that the normal local authority grant is still under discussion. Under the curious system that we have in Britain, it will be autumn before local authorities know the figure for the year starting next April. One wonders how businesses could operate on the same basis, but that is the way in which Governments operate. However, it should be possible to say now what will be the tranche which up to now was income support. It should further be clarified how the tranche will be applied.

For example, if a person is assessed as most suitably accommodated in an Abbeyfield home, will that cost be met in full by the local authority or will the local authority have only sufficient funds to pay what was up to now the income support level? As we know, that was often not sufficient to meet the full cost. Who will fill the gap?

If local authorities are obliged to make assessments, it is rather important that they have the resources to provide the services that they have decided are required. While I realise that my hon. Friend the Minister is unlikely to be able to give us a detailed reply in this Second Reading debate, there will be a useful opportunity in Committee to discuss how the important National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 is being implemented.

Can my hon. Friend give us more information on resources and funding? What will be available and how will it be applied? That information would be of enormous value to local authority officers who, with the assistance of many people in the private and voluntary sectors, are hard at work preparing for next April. They need assurances that they will have the means to carry out what Parliament has instructed them to do.

5.22 pm

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I welcome this non-controversial Bill. It gives me an opportunity to ask some questions and raise several issues. The House is probably aware, as I am sure you are aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that at present income support levels often do not meet the cost of either residential or nursing homes. Elderly people often have to make up the shortfall or, if they are fortunate enough to have a relative around, a relative has to make up the shortfall. As has already been said, if there are no relatives, problems can arise.

What exactly does the Minister have in mind on funding? When local authorities take over the responsibility for paying for homes and residential accommodation, will the Minister give the same money as the income support level? Or is he thinking of paying the actual cost of the home? It is essential for us to know that. If local authorities do not receive the actual cost, many will say that they cannot provide as many places as perhaps they should.

People with learning difficulties are a good example. At present, such people are assessed and a statement is made. That statement is often made taking into account what facilities are available to the local authority. I am desperately afraid that the same thing could happen with this Bill and that local authorities will assess only on the strength of what they have available in residential accommodation. This is an important point to remember.

Another matter of concern is inspection. What does the Minister have in mind? Does he intend perhaps to set up an independent inspection unit? I should like far more inspections to take place in residential and, indeed, nursing homes. More inspections should be carried out unannounced. I know that that already happens to a certain extent, but I should like to see many more such inspections to ensure that standards are maintained in homes.

I am aware that the matter is not covered specifically by the Bill, but what are the Minister's views on the use of the Buxton chair, which I understand is still used in certain residential and nursing homes? It is sometimes referred to as the "naughty chair".

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The Bill is fairly tightly drawn. I have been pretty generous in allowing a wide debate, but we cannot go way beyond the scope of the Bill.

Ms. Lynne: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move on to my last point about the funds that will be made available. I should like far more funds to be made available for community care generally. Come April 1993, when the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 must be implemented, local authorities throughout the country will have horrendous problems unless they have more funds and those funds are ring-fenced.

I make a plea to the Government again today seriously to consider ring-fencing the funds for community care, and specifically for residential homes. If the Government do

not ring-fence the funds or find some way of insisting that local authorities spend on those homes, the money allocated for residential homes they will hive off the money for pet projects. I should like some assurances on that.

5.26 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I join my hon. Friends in congratulating the Minister on his appointment. With his former association with the Spastics Society, a great deal is expected of him. I am sure that he knows that. I also congratulate your good self, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. It is a clear indication that being a rebel is no bar to respectability afterwards.

I find the Bill a little confusing in several respects. I am delighted that we are having this debate and that time will be found for reasonable discussion in Committee so that we can clarify some of the difficulties which emerge. My first difficulty with the Bill is why it does not apply to Scotland or, as the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) reminded me, Northern Ireland. Perhaps we can be told what the problem is.

In the explanatory memorandum there is a reference to a lacuna, which is presumably the reason for the Bill. I do not know whether there is a Scots word for "lacuna". Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) can help me with that. I think that it means that there is a gap. I do not know whether there is a similar gap or lacuna in Scotland, but if there is, can we do something about it? If there is not, may we hear about it?

My hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), rightly addressed the Bill in the context of our worries about community care in the 1990s. It is reasonable that we should have such a discussion at an early stage in this Parliament. We have heard some interesting speeches and I am sure that there will be other equally interesting speeches later. The Chamber is not so packed as it might be if this were a debate on Maastricht, but I humbly suggest that Members of Parliament will receive far more representations at their surgeries in the next four or five years about what is happening to community care for the elderly in our society than even about the important issue of Maastricht. The matter should therefore be viewed in that context.

Some of us received a document from the Royal College of Nursing this week entitled, "A Scandal Waiting to Happen". It tackles the problems of elderly people in nursing care in residential and nursing homes which are dealt with in the Bill. It makes a number of important points which are central to our approach to such matters —for example, the provision of proper funding after assessments take place. The booklet reflects a view which has been expressed in the debate when it says:

"Like many other organisations, the Royal College of Nursing has expressed concern that the money being allocated to local authorities to carry out their duties under the NHS and Community Care Act should be ringfenced."

I am glad to see the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) in his place because the Select Committee which he chaired with some distinction, and the former Select Committee which dealt with such matters when there was a single joint Department, understood that there was a strong case for ring-fencing, as did so many other reports. The Griffiths report dealt with the matter and complained that legislation in a difficult area, involving the elderly and their carers, is being passed in dribs and drabs —I fear that the Bill tends to suggest that the Griffiths report was right about that, if it was not necessarily right about everything else. The Bill represents dribs and drabs.

We spent a great deal of time in Committee dealing with the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. We have been told that the community care provisions will be introduced in 1993. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) said, there have been strong rumours from the Department of Health that that is not now the Government's intention and that they are under strong pressure to postpone their commitment. I hope that it may be within the rules of the debate for the Minister to deal with that—if he will listen to what I am saying. I am not sure what the Foreign Office has to do with these matters, but he might be better advised listening to hon. Members than to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who is sitting beside him. Will the Minister tell us whether the commitment to the community care sections of the 1990 Act is still as firm as the Government have suggested?

In common with my hon. Friends, I am greatly worried about our approach to this issue if the Royal College of Nursing takes the view that there is a scandal waiting to happen. When dealing with the enormous problems faced by elderly people, if we leave so much to market forces, without even providing for adequate inspection of public and private sector homes—although I accept that there should be no distinction between them—we do not seem to be making much progress.

Although we welcome the main thrust of the Bill's proposals, I am worried that yet again local authorities are being viewed as enablers rather than providers. In the absence of ring-fencing, enormous financial requirements are being made of local authorities, but it is not clear whether funding will be made available.

The Bill, and questions about it, are especially relevant at a time when we are considering the transfer of funding. Local authorities face great problems. The hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) mentioned their obligations under the Children Act 1989, and it is right that we should deal with the problems of children in need, but local authority budgets will have to cope with such important matters. I served on the Standing Committee on the Children Act, as did many hon. Members. We understood that such progress was being made. When we eventually hand all that legislation over to the local authority social services departments and the Scottish social work departments, they will have to decide their priorities. I do not think that they will welcome the job, given present financial constraints.

An additional problem in the 1990 Act, which the Government seek to amend by the Bill, is the transfer of funding from the Department of Social Security. The problem facing local authorities is clear. They will have to deal with the social security expenditure shortfall—with the fees deficit—and that will be made more difficult when the Bill is enacted. We are told that the present shortfall means £30 per week for a person in a care home and £50 per person for those in nursing homes.

If the Bill is enacted, a further responsibility will be passed to the local authorities, at the same time as the Government transfer an inbuilt deficit of £132 million to them. It is therefore reasonable for the Government to

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explain their view of the priorities. What guidelines have they offered to local authorities? How do they view the central issue of assessment, for example, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) referred?

It is not enough merely to produce a Bill of this sort, or even to say that the Government are going ahead with the 1990 Act, without considering the global problems of community care and without telling us whether they agree with the main thrust of the Griffiths report, which said that there should be genuine care within the community.

If we simply pile elderly people into institutions—to use a somewhat crude expression—that does not mean that we are providing care in the community. Happily, there is a growing number of elderly people. Surely we should demand that those men and women, who have brought up families and worked in their communities, are assessed properly to make certain that they are able to remain in the community. We should ask ourselves whether many of those people would be happier remaining in their communities, with the provision of more home helps and occupational therapists, and improvements in the meals on wheels and chiropody services.

With the emphasis being placed on providing residential care, mainly in the private sector, and on reducing resources for local authorities—including education, which ought not to be beyond the reach of the elderly, who are a part of our community and should be seen as such—I worry that we are not producing a real strategy for care in the community. We are pursuing the accountancy of the problems faced by the Treasury. A real strategy would mean that more elderly people would find independence but would be genuinely supported, when there is a need for such support, within the community.

I hope that we shall also be able to tackle the problem of advocacy in Committee. If we are dealing with proper assessments, with the role of carers, and trying to enrich the lives of the elderly, and especially the institutionalised, advocacy becomes profoundly important.

I was delighted that a group was established in Scotland this week to deal with dementia. Clearly, those people have rights. In the absence of advocacy, nobody in private or even public homes will be able to say they do not like a particular room, that they are unhappy because of social security problems, the food and clothing available, or that they have problems with incontinence. The elderly may feel that such important matters are not being dealt with.

Sadly, we all know from our constituency visits that, in some cases, the problem of incontinence is not being addressed. In the absence of advocacy, which I hope will be included in the Bill, I hope that elderly people will be assured that, at least, we are concerned about their lifestyle, health and welfare and that that is not inconsistent with the strategy for community care.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On the sad and sensitive matter of incontinence, is the hon. Gentleman, who has served as a distinguished member of the Select Committee on Health, concerned about the anomalies in the free provision of incontinence pads? I say without reservation that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who opened the debate for the Opposition, has done some wonderful work on that issue. It is crazy that elderly people in hospitals and in county council part III statutory accommodation are in receipt of incontinence pads, but those in private nursing and residential homes have to pay for them separately. Is that not an issue to which the Government should give urgent attention?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman makes an excellent and valid point.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Minister thinks that it is all wonderful.

Mr. Clarke: Apart from the importance of the issue which, as the hon. Member for Macclesfield rightly pointed out, my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr has promoted—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) wishes to speak, he can seek to intervene, but I prefer not to hear too many sedentary comments because they detract from the speech of the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke).

Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Member for Macclesfield has made a valid point which helps to underscore my concluding remarks—I know that other hon. Members wish to speak. Advocacy—in the private sector especially, but I do not exclude it from the public sector—is important for elderly people.

At the beginning of my speech, I stressed that the vital issue of community care, including the problems of the elderly, are ones that we shall debate often in the course of the Parliament. It is right that we should do that. I regret to say that one reason for that is that, in the previous Parliament, we did not give the matter the priority that it deserved. We are all reminded by our elderly constituents that they are part of society and that their needs—and, above all, their rights—are matters that we should consider.

This small Bill follows on from the Government's major National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. We have not seen much evidence to support the belief that the Government have broken away from the ideology of 1990. I do not see that those on the Government Front Bench are as committed to a mixed economy system in care as is my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr, with whom I agree. I hope that as our discussions develop the Government will accept that in the provision of community care we should have a commitment to a genuine provision of services to the elderly. There should be representations and consultations about their needs in the public and private sectors. We should ensure that there will be proper inspections at every level so that elderly people enjoy the fulfilled and enriched lives that the people of this country would expect the House to deliver.

5.44 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment, but I apologise for unavoidably missing the early part of this debate. However, I very much appreciate the opportunity to join in the discussion. I also apologise for missing my hon. Friend the Minister's opening speech. I shall look forward to reading it and I congratulate him on his appointment. He brings to it his long experience of

working with disabled people, and he has always shown great sensitivity to their needs. I am confident that he will fulfil his duties well.

I am pleased that the Government have introduced the Bill, because maximum flexibility is essential and local authorities should use the services of the private sector. I listened with care to the speech of the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), but I was confused by one of his points. I noted that he said that the resources available to local authorities had been reduced. I am sure that, in the provision of community care, we have increased resources to local authorities. If we consider the future for local authorities, an increasing proportion of local authority resources will go into community care. Perhaps fewer resources will go into education if more schools opt out, but more will go into community care.

Mr. Hinchliffe: At the end of his speech, will the hon. Gentleman accompany me to the House of Commons Library? There I shall introduce him to a researcher who will show him detailed figures—the hon. Gentleman was not present when I spoke—that show that the Government's reduction in rate support grant since 1979 has taken £6 billion out of local authority social service expenditure. They are not my figures or those of the Labour party: they are the figures of the House of Commons Library, and I look forward to taking the hon. Gentleman along the Corridor.

Mr. Thurnham: I am sorry that I was not present to hear the hon. Gentleman's speech, but I shall read *Hansard* with care. The figures that I have seen show an increase in resources, and there is no doubt that, in future, the proportion of local authority resources going into community care will increase, even if the proportion of resources going into education is reduced.

Mr. Tom Clarke: The hon. Gentleman will find that I was arguing that local authorities are being asked to undertake more and more responsibilities, and the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) made the same point about the Children Act 1989. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, whatever the argument about figures, my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) produced some important ones? If the case for ring-fencing is established, we will at least know how much funding is being made available.

Mr. Thurnham: I do not follow that argument, to which the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) also referred. I do not believe that local authorities will divert resources from community care. The pressures and demands are for more resources in community care, so I do not believe that local authorities will divert such resources elsewhere.

I do not think that resources need to be ring-fenced because we cannot trust local authorities to spend their money where the needs are greatest. Local authorities are in the best position to make such judgments and, if anything, they will spend more than they possibly would if the expenditure was ring fenced. I do not follow the hon. Gentleman's argument: we need maximum flexibility.

I have seen an enormous community care plan produced by my authority in Bolton, and other Members will have seen similar plans produced by their authorities. Of course, it is the responsibility of local authorities to produce such plans and to have them approved in order to start implementing the new services for which they will be responsible in 12 months' time.

Tomorrow I shall visit a centre which has been created for the provision of respite care and residential care, in a former children's home in my constituency at Moss Nook. I am delighted that it has been set up and is being arranged by a new charitable organisation that has been set up by the Bolton handicap action group. The work has been done in partnership with the health authority—in future I hope that the local authority will also be involved. Such partnership is the best way to provide services with the maximum flexibility.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West said that councils should act as enablers rather than as providers. I am glad that that message has got through, as it is the best way to provide community care services in the future. Some counties, such as Kent, have set a good example in providing services in the most efficient way by remembering that they are first and foremost enablers and not providers.

I look forward to the passage of the Bill. There should be the maximum flexibility. Local authorities should be trusted to use their discretion and there seems no need to ring-fence their funds, because they are in the best position to assess needs and decide how best to use their resources. I hope that local authorities will not try to make a political football out of all this, because the needs are real, the resources can be found and they must be used wisely. Those resources should not be distorted or manipulated to make political capital out of the needs of the people for whom they are intended.

5.50 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): It is desirable for everybody that local authorities are able to offer the widest possible choice to people seeking residential care. I welcome the Bill because, when enacted, it will provide a wider spread of provision available to local authority social service directorates.

It is unfortunate that there should have been such a long delay in implementing the community care legislation. It seemed to have fallen victim to the Government's poll tax folly. In other words, caring for people was sacrificed in an effort to prop up the doomed poll tax that continued the previous Government's policy of making the rich better off at the expense of the poor. Thatcherism will go down in history as a Robin Hood in reverse—robbing the poor to give to the rich.

Many elderly people, including the confused, the physically and mentally handicapped, those with autism and people with drug and alcohol problems, are eagerly awaiting the implementation of the community care legislation in April. I hope that the rumours about possible further delay in implementation are not true. The people concerned, and the carers, must not be let down. Certainly they should not be made to wait any longer for this legislation.

To ensure that their expectations, which are many and varied, are met, we must provide good-quality services. Most local authorities have been working hard to that end. They already have in place their registration and inspection units and are endeavouring to develop policies

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encompassing all the elements of good-quality care, offering a wide range of choice. That will be made better by the Bill.

Many local authorities, working with area health authorities and the voluntary and commercial sectors, are operating genuine partnerships with the aim of providing professional and good quality care; but if community care is to be of the highest quality, giving real choice to users and carers, it must be provided by a highly trained and motivated work force in the local authority voluntary and commercial sectors.

That can be done only with proper funding by the Government. Real choice and quality cannot be offered on the cheap or set against a backdrop of a budget that cannot be altered. If we are to offer real choice and quality, people must be given it genuinely and be told that there is no budget backdrop to that choice.

We are now less than 12 months from implementation, yet local authorities still do not know how they will be funded and how much they will get. People must be trained and many new procedures developed and in place well before that date. If local authorities and others are to be ready, they must know as soon as possible the detailed information about the social security transfer of funds.

Why is it that we and local authorities still do not know the conclusions of the deliberations of the so-called algebra group that was set up to try to sort out the transfer of funds? Like my hon. Friends, I urge the Secretary of State to ring-fence the extra funding to ensure that the money is used on community care and not lost in wider local authority budgets. I have no doubt that it would be put to good use if they were allowed to use it for other causes, but we must make sure that the money is targeted directly into social service budgets so that it is used to implement this legislation.

Local authorities want to know how the Government expect them to fund the work force who will be needed to implement the final stages of the community care legislation. They need up-to-date information on the number of people currently in, and those projected to enter, independent care. Most local authorities are keen to undertake their new responsibilities for community care and have made considerable effort to meet required objectives. This measure will help them in that respect.

Recent reports from the social services inspectorate, regional health authorities and the Audit Commission suggest that local authorities are well on target. The final word on all the issues to which I have referred, and therefore responsibility for the effective implementation of the proposals, lies with the Government. I hope that the Secretary of State will promise the British people that the Government will make adequate funds available to ensure that, when they need care, they will get it when they need it, rather than being put on a waiting list for assessment.

Will the Secretary of State also promise them real choice and give an assurance that local authorities will not have to rob Peter to pay Paul in order to fund that choice? Will she also promise that people will not have to wait any longer for a high-quality community care programme, whatever their needs and wherever they live in Britain.

5.56 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am glad of this opportunity to contribute to the debate and, like my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), I apologise for being absent for the early part of it. The studio in which I was located for a time was linked to the Chamber, so I was able to hear a major part of the speeches of those who spoke earlier.

I am pleased to support the views expressed by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). He highlighted many problems that those of us who have taken a great interest in community care anticipate and believe will occur on 1 April of next year. I view that date with deep concern. It is not only my concern: it has been expressed to me by senior officials and others concerned with and appointed to help authorities and those who work in local authority social service departments.

The hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) thought—I share his view—that social service departments were unaware of the resources that they would have to spend on community care as from 1 April of next year. That state of affairs does not enable social service departments, which will be the lead authorities in community care, to make adequate plans.

I need not remind the House that we are talking of groups of people, particularly the elderly, who are among the most vulnerable in society. I view with concern the decisions being taken by county council social service departments to shed their part III residential homes and dispose of them, in the main, to non-profit-making charitable organisations which take over the management and running of the homes.

I am delighted to see in his place my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, because nobody knows more than he about social security income support and all matters relating to assistance and benefit available to the needy and elderly. He knows that grave problems face elderly people in the funding of their residential care. The more people there are who depend on the private sector, the more difficult it will become. That is a matter to which the Government, and particularly the Department of Health, will have to give careful consideration.

We look to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to do a great deal between now and 1 April next year. He has a fine reputation for dealing with vulnerable groups in our society. He was a distinguished officer of the Spastics Society and he served on the Select Committee for Health and its predecessor Committees, and we look to him to achieve a great deal in the introduction of community care in Britain.

The one thing that causes me some concern is the last paragraph of the explanatory memorandum. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) will criticise me if I do not point it out, and perhaps will criticise me if I do, because it says:

"The Bill should not result in any increase in public expenditure, or have any effect on public service manpower."

It should. We must oil the wheels of community care to ensure that it works and that those who deserve the support of hon. Members, on whatever side they sit—the elderly and other vulnerable groups—should be totally confident that, in the implementation of what is a dramatic change in policy, community care, brought into effect and

implemented by the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, has the resources to make it work.

Hon. Members would not expect me to sit down without saying that I too, like many who have spoken, wish expenditure in the specialist areas to be ring-fenced. Roy Griffiths said in his report that the money should be ring-fenced. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is nodding and smiling at me, and I am delighted that he is. I know, because of his own concern, just how much he is anxious about this and how much he wishes to see the community care policy working.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton) *rose*——

Mr. Winterton: I am delighted to give way to such a senior Minister.

Mr. Newton: I apologise to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for intervening in a matter relating to my old pastures rather than my current one. I was nodding and smiling only because, as I think my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) knows perfectly well, the purpose of the Bill is modest—to correct an error in the original Bill affecting the Abbeyfield Society. I have to admire his ingenuity in ranging over the whole area of community care in the course of the debate.

Mr. Winterton: I can only pay tribute to the discretion and good sense of the Chair in enabling me to highlight a number of deep concerns felt on both sides of the House, which is helpful——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not rely too much on my discretion.

Mr. Winterton: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that sound piece of advice, which, naturally, as a member of the Chairmen's Panel, I shall heed immediately.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman probably missed some of the debate while he was in the television studio, so I should tell him that the Minister initiated a debate on the whole of community care, not just the narrow terms of the Bill. That was entirely endorsed by the then Deputy Speaker. Unfortunately, the Leader of the House did not hear the opening speech, so his remarks are slightly out of order.

Mr. Winterton: It would be completely inappropriate for me to comment on what the hon. Gentleman says. I always take the advice of the Chair, and as long as I serve in this place I shall continue to do so.

I am linking my remarks to the explanatory memorandum which, I repeat, says:

"The Bill should not result in any increase in public expenditure, or have any effect on public service manpower."

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent) *rose*——

Mr. Winterton: I shall give way in a moment to my hon. Friend, who was another distinguished member of the Select Committee on Health in the previous Parliament.

It may well be necessary in the course of the further stages of this legislation to tell the House that additional resources, both by way of public expenditure and in respect of public service manpower, may well be required to plug what is described in the explanatory memorandum as a lacuna created by the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend's ingenious use of the explanatory memorandum seems to link with an earlier remark when he said that it is particularly sad that local authorities should be getting rid of their part III accommodation. The implication was that, in the private or non-profit-making sector, one might look for rather less effectiveness than in the public sector. I hope that is not what he means. He would be greatly mistaken if that was what he meant. I hope that he will correct any misapprehension on my part.

Mr. Winterton: I am delighted to respond to my hon. Friend. I look to community care to provide a wide range of facilities. I see developing a situation in which in many areas there will be few what I describe as statutory part III residential homes. Almost exclusively, the social service departments, acting as facilitators, as purchasers of services, not necessarily as providers, will not have the scope of choice that I believe is necessary. That is a point that has already been made in speeches today.

I am entirely in favour of partnership. I am entirely in favour of the private sector being an important part of that partnership. I am also in favour of the non-profit-making charitable organisations being part of the overall provision that is available to social service departments to choose from in respect of accommodation and care for the elderly and other vulnerable groups within the community. But I am deeply concerned that choice, which the Government have said should be an important part of the new system, will be limited. When elderly people are assessed about the accommodation and care they require, the assessment might well be affected by the availability of facilities.

Whether or not my hon. Friends are prepared to say it, clearly we are loading a heavy additional responsibility on to local authorities. I remain to be convinced that sufficient resources will be transferred to local authorities, in the main from health authorities, to enable local authorities as the lead authority in community care to provide the level of service and the range of accommodation that is required if community care in Britain really is to work.

Again, I make a plea for ring fencing, which has been suggested by Labour Members and Liberal Democrats and is also supported by Conservative Members. I am aware of many authorities, such as my own in Macclesfield, where the health authority and social service departments have now put forward a blueprint of what they hope to achieve. But the fruition, the true implementation, of what is contained in the excellent and well-researched proposal booklet that has been issued in my area will entirely depend on the level of resources that is made available.

The Bill is relatively tight, but the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State had introduced the Bill widely, embracing the whole scope of community care. I suspect that he did, although I heard only tiny snippets of his contribution. However, I know from the experience that he has had that he will have put a good case.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is fundamentally important that, when the Bill is implemented on 1 April 1993, money is made available so that disabled housing grants can be in

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place? It would be nonsense to have insufficient resources to provide the disabled with the aids they require in their homes—such as rails around the toilet and bath. In the Welsh context, a long waiting period for essential aids could make the Bill a nonsense.

Mr. Winterton: The hon. Gentleman makes an excellent point. His intervention, together with the excellent speech of the hon. Member for Monklands, West shows how effective this is as a Parliament of the United Kingdom. We do not need separate legislatures to highlight the particular problems of Wales, Scotland or—I say this to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe)—of the northern, north-western, or west midlands regions.

The hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) was right to highlight the need to provide resources to enable local authority social services departments to provide adaptations and modifications to homes so that the elderly and infirm can continue to live in the community.

The hon. Gentleman's question perhaps implied that, if that cannot be done, community care cannot effectively be implemented in the United Kingdom. I share his concern to some extent. Those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who are deeply committed to an effective community care system and programme are aware that there are resource problems. There are rumours that the Government may seek further to postpone the programme. I hope that they do not. Although we are not utterly ready for it, a postponement would affect the morale of those who are desperately seeking to be ready by 1 April 1993 to an extent that would be counter-productive.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have been generous in allowing my speech to range wider than it ought to have done, but I followed my hon. Friend on the Government Front Bench in that—and I know that others of its members wish that I would do that rather more often. I promise them that I shall seek to do so, bearing in mind my own reputation and independence of mind. I say to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary that my comments come not just from the heart but from the head. He knows that the Select Committee on Social Services made a long, deep and detailed study of community care. We produced some excellent reports, with fine conclusions and recommendations—many of which received a positive response from the Department of Health.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to give an assurance that the Bill will remove a lacuna created by the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, and that —despite the final sentence of the explanatory memorandum—the Government will give serious consideration to the provision of additonal resources, if they are needed before the legislation's implementation on 1 April 1993.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister is aware that we are dealing with very vulnerable groups that cannot themselves promote a good case on their own behalf. They look to the House or to Parliament as a whole to ensure that their interests are safeguarded in the dramatic change of policy that is encapsulated in the 1990 Act.

6.15 pm

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): I join other hon. Members in congratulating you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment, and in welcoming this legislation, which is little more than a technical tidying up to give local authorities the power to place people in and pay for facilities that are not registered under the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Community care is at a watershed, and stability is of the essence. Certainty in the nature and range of provision is the only way in which the confidence of those who rely on that provision and their carers will be sustained. Concerns are emerging about the way in which the broader community care policy is being implemented.

There is a danger that the legislation's excellent intentions and all the fine rhetoric from hon. and right hon. Members in all parts of the House will not be borne out by the daily experience of elderly and disabled people throughout the country. It is the job of the House to do everything in its power to ensure that the legislation's promises are honoured in the provision of better opportunities in the daily lives of the elderly and disabled.

Ministers have repeatedly given assurances that the new legislation will be adequately funded. The definition of adequacy will promote extensive debate among right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. The importance of adequate funding cannot be overstated in terms of ensuring certainty and stability. Local authorities in particular must have the money to do properly the job that Parliament has willed them to do.

Negotiations are under way about the money to be made available. I suspect that it may create difficulties for local authorities that the sums will be announced not in July as originally intended but in October.

Reference has been made to the difficulties anticipated by local authorities because the money to be transferred to them to purchase care for people in their own homes or in residential accommodation will not be ring-fenced and specifically identified—and will therefore be susceptible. There are grave doubts also about the adequacy of the distribution formula, with evidence that the money may not be distributed by central Government to local government in accordance with local need.

Local authorities have been charged with the technically and managerially demanding job of implementing the legislation. Its complexity is extensively acknowledged—most recently, by the Audit Commission. In recent years, local authority infrastructure and the capacity to plan for these changes has been eroded as Government cuts have been forced on local authorities.

Other hon. Members have referred to the problem created by the "fee gap"—the difference between the amount that residential and nursing home care costs, and the amount that is available from social security to pay for that care. It is terribly important for that problem to be rectified as part of the negotiations about the amount to be made available to local authorities. Current estimates suggest that there is an average discrepancy of some £30 a week between the cost of a residential care place and the amount made available through the social security system. In the case of nursing home places, the discrepancy is about £50 a week.

My constituency is fortunate to benefit from a small project—run under the auspices of Age Concern—that arranges placements for people who have been discharged from long-stay hospital care into private nursing care, searching the country for places where care can be provided at income support levels. Although, as a result, people are often placed a long way from home, the project also provides follow-up through visiting. I understand that

it is a unique initiative, and that elderly people in other parts of the country cannot be guaranteed access to such valuable support.

Mr. Rowe: I share the hon. Lady's anxiety for the amount available for community care to be sufficient. Is it not the case, however, that, when the purchaser of such care is the local authority and not, as at present, the Department of Social Security operating at one remove, it will be much easier to match what is available with what can be afforded?

Ms. Jowell: I shall come to that point. The Social Security Select Committee called for an urgent review of the fee gap, and I echo that call. If we do not sort out the problem now, local authorities will inherit an inherent deficit in the budget passed to them by Government via the revenue support grant, and that structural underfunding will limit the number of people in residential care whom authorities can support.

In setting up contracts with independent providers, local authorities will be required to underwrite the cost in full. At present, the shortfall is being met by means of a range of cobbled-together solutions. Organisations such as Counsel and Care for the Elderly and Age Concern can provide substantial anecdotal evidence of the pressure that is put on relatives to find what may be large amounts of money to make good that shortfall. My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) mentioned a figure of £142 million: that is a considerable sum, which must be taken into account in the calculation of local authority funding.

Another problem affects people who are currently in residential and nursing home care, who have what are described as "preserved rights" under the new arrangements. That often means that families or charities must make good the continued shortfall. If this important matter is not sorted out now—if money is not made available on the basis of the available evidence—the long-term success of the policy may be jeopardised.

A second problem that may sabotage the best efforts of local authorities relates to the current dispute between the Department of Health and local authority associations about the number of people currently admitted to residential and nursing home care each year. I understand that the discrepancy now stands at between 15,000 and 20,000, and the costs associated with an underestimate of this scale in the number of people entering residential care is sufficient to jeopardise the policy's success further.

To a large extent, such problems arise through the inadequacy and unreliability of available information. We do not really know how many people are in residential care, from which local authorities they have come and who will be responsible once the legislation is fully implemented. Those factors do not merely jeopardise the capacity of local authorities to do the job that they want to do; they have a direct and immediate impact on the well-being and confidence of disabled elderly people and their carers.

Adequate funding must be made available. It must be recognised that the new policy focuses particularly on support for elderly and disabled people to remain in their own homes, and that because of lack of alternatives, they may have to go into residential care. Estimates suggest that, at any time, about 10 per cent. of elderly people in almost any residential home in the country might have lived independently in their own homes if the necessary support had been available.

We need the capacity to maintain the stability of the residential sector, but local authorities also need the capacity to begin to build up and develop the new forms of domiciliary care that will be essential if the objectives of the policy are to be achieved in the years to come. We want more elderly and disabled people to live longer in the safety and security of their own homes.

None of us can have failed to be moved by the report published last week by the Carers National Association, which drew particular attention to the amount of illness suffered by carers. One of the great promises contained in the Bill is that the level, quality and sensitivity of support for carers will be much higher than it has been in the past, but local authorities will require money if they are to achieve that. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If Conservative Front Benchers were quieter, I might be able to hear what the hon. Lady is saying.

Ms. Jowell: It is essential that the promises that have been made—in the boldest terms—to improve the quality and level of support for friends and relatives who care for the elderly and disabled in their own homes are delivered in practice.

Let me end my speech by asking four questions, which I hope the Minister will answer. First, do the Government recognise the risks of failing to enter into early discussions with local authority associations about the shortfall that authorities are in danger of inheriting—a shortfall that may endanger their capacity to implement the policy properly?

Secondly, does the Minister recognise that additional difficulties have been caused because the money made available to support community care is not ring-fenced?

Thirdly, what provision is to be made for the inevitable contingencies that will arise as unforeseen problems are encountered? At the end of the last Parliament, the Government were prepared to bale out hospital trusts that had run into financial difficulties. I hope that the same effort will be put into ensuring stability in the care and support of elderly and disabled people.

Finally, recognising that one of the most important factors for elderly disabled people and their carers—the beneficiaries of the legislation—is certainty and clarity about what they are entitled to, will the Minister also consider introducing a community care, carers and users charter as an expression of general enthusiasm for citizens charters, about which we have heard so much from the Government? Codification of this entitlement—setting it out clearly—would be one of the greatest benefits that we could extend to carers and disabled people, whose lives are often made more difficult and burdensome by the confusion, red tape and bureaucracy that they have to try to penetrate in pursuit of the care and support they need.

6.31 pm

Ms. Ann Coffey (Stockport): I wish to refer specifically to the exclusion of small residential homes from inspection under the Bill, which I find difficult to understand. If someone goes into a home in which there are two other people, the monitoring of standards in that home should not be significantly different from those that apply to a

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home where there may be three other people. I cannot stress too strongly how important is the role of inspection in maintaining and monitoring standards, particularly where care and finance are closely linked.

Reference has already been made to the problems encountered over the financing of care in private residential homes. They are caused by high interest rates and low Department of Social Security grants. Financial problems of that nature affect the care that is given to residents. They also have an effect on the quality of staff employed in those homes.

Hon. Members have referred to the use of personal allowances and charging for extra items. Also, threatening residents with eviction because they cannot pay their fees is not the way to make them feel that they are being cared for. Sadly, though, that is a step that a residential home may have to take. It has a damaging effect on the people in that home.

Apart from the effect on the quality of nursing care, lack of finance also has an effect on local health authority provision. During the last year, my health authority has experienced an enormous increase in the number of acute admissions. That is ironic, since two wards were closed and nursing care was transferred to the private sector to release resources. Part of the reason for the increase in acute admissions may be that the quality of nursing care provided by private nursing homes was not good enough. That leads to an additional burden being placed on the health authority. Moreover, it means that beds for people who need operations cannot be made available.

The inspection process as a whole is inadequate, but particularly for nursing homes. The district health authority is responsible for inspection. If, however, a district health authority should deregister a home, it could lay itself open to a claim for compensation on appeal. Some district health authorities therefore might adopt an over-cautious approach.

The guidelines for inspection are insufficiently specific. They are fairly specific in terms of physical standards of care—the number of beds per room and toilet facilities—but they are not specific when it comes to the measurement of quality of care, which is, of course, very difficult. However difficult it may be, it should be attempted. Emotional support is important for residents; the activities provided for residents are important. Their emotional support should be given the same attention as their physical needs, if the Government are serious about raising the standards of care in residential accommodation.

If we raise standards, the costs will rise. When the residential allowance is announced, I hope that it will take into account the higher costs of better care. If it does not do so, local authorities will have to make up the shortfall. If the cost of residential care becomes too expensive for local authorities, they will have insufficient money to spend on community care. The result, therefore, of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 will be an increase in expensive private residential sector care which could have been provided much more cheaply by local authorities had the Government allowed local authorities to borrow capital in order to make the necessary adaptations to local authority homes.

I urge the Minister to think carefully about a number of issues, but particularly about the inspection process and tightening up the guidelines. I hope that he will think carefully, too, about the provision of an independent inspection process for nursing homes. It should not be provided by the district health authority. That can lead to conflicts of interest. May I ask the Minister also to think carefully about providing the right amount of money for residential care? If he is determined to provide it through the private sector and to disadvantage the public sector, the residential allowance must enable good care to be provided, as well as profit. If the Minister does not make provision for the profit margin, the care provided to residents will inevitably suffer.

6.37 pm

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): May I start by telling you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one story? I hope that it will bring the debate about community care down to earth. This happened to me during the election campaign. Hon. Members know that one of the curious habits of parliamentary candidates is to go up to perfect strangers in the street and ask them about their health. Sadly, one is really asking them about their vote.

On this occasion, the woman I spoke to turned on me in great anger and said that she was voting for no one, and why should she? She pointed to her husband, whom she was pushing in a wheelchair and who was seriously handicapped, and said, "I am his carer"—she used that word—"and I get virtually no help. Sometimes I have to care for him almost around the clock, such is the nature of his disability. I hear about community care. I know that that is a lie. I am not going to vote for anyone." I found that a difficult argument, because of the passion with which it was presented to me, to refute.

A curious British habit is to use the English language in imprecise ways—sometimes in ways that are virtually a contradiction. While we all talk, as I do, about community care, the reality all too often is not care but neglect. The reality is community neglect in Britain. That is not just rhetoric. I recall data from the general household survey of carers which showed that the majority of carers receive no help at all.

What worries me about our debates—I refer not just to our debate in this Chamber but to the debates in the country—about community care, not least because of the jargon with which the professionals like to bemuse us, is that, while we hear about "packages of care" and the "seamless service", the reality for most people in this position is, very often, nothing.

Despite the expertise in the House, there is probably greater expertise elsewhere around Westminster, such as Victoria street late at night. It would be good for all of us, certainly Ministers, to leave the House occasionally, walk up Victoria street late at night and talk to those trying to sleep in shop doorways. Many of them are elderly or suffering from mental illness. They would be surprised to learn that they are examples of community care. It would be good for us all to experience that type of so-called community care. Therefore, we should be careful about our terminology.

Despite the poor attendance in the Chamber, and no doubt the lack of press interest in this debate, this must be one of the most important subjects that the House will debate. That point has already been made by many hon.

Members. It is a subject that will grow in importance. The number of us who will reach a ripe old age is growing significantly year by year. As has already been pointed out, it is not just the aging of the population that is significant, but the aging of the elderly population itself. In the first census this century, in 1901, there were just 50,000 people over the age of 85—Wembley stadium half full. By the 1981 census the number had increased tenfold, to 500,000. Between 1981 and the year 2001, the number will double again, so that we will have over 1 million people aged 85 or over.

It would be agist and incorrect to say that all those poeople will need care in the community or elsewhere. Many are sprightly and will go on "Jim'll Fix It" and jump out of an aeroplane for the first time at the age of 85, hopefully with a parachute. However, we cannot be romantic about aging, because many of those people will suffer from Alzheimer's disease, be senile in other ways or incontinent and may need a great deal of care in our community. So the demography is against us. If this debate is important now, it will be even more important in five or 10 years. If we are to get it right, let us get it right sooner rather than later.

The debate is also important—this is a challenge to us all—because of the cost of so-called care in the community. Do we know enough about the cost of such care? When I say that, I am thinking about financial as well as social costs. We know from some estimates that the amount of care provided by family carers, let alone the Government, runs into billions of pounds. Because of the curious way in which we do our national arithmetic, none of those costs and contributions made by family carers will be found in our gross domestic product, which is the peculiar and narrow form of arithmetic that we sometimes take more seriously than we should.

I am interested in the cost of community care and who pays for it. At the moment, it is almost random. If a person becomes ill and is being treated in a national health service hospital, the costs are met by the NHS, with no direct payments from the patient. If the patient is cared for by a daughter or daughter-in-law, the costs will largely be met by the family, perhaps with some support from social security. If the person goes into a residential home and is below income support levels, the costs are largely met by the Department of Social Security. There is no consensus as to who should pay for the costs of aging. Should it be the elderly person if they can afford it, even if it means selling their main asset, their home, if they have one? Should the costs be paid for by the family, the state or the private sector? Those are important questions for the future that need to be grappled with.

The debate is also important because of the social and moral argument. Unless we can get this right and truly provide community care, we all suffer in a social and moral sense. I know that this is something of a cliché, but surely there can be no greater challenge than to enable our elders —that is how we should think of them—to live out their lives in comfort and with dignity. That is why the question of policy is so important.

Our Government and many others have waxed lyrical about community care over two decades. However, policy has been a slow train coming. It took reports from the Audit Commission and many other groups to embarrass the Government into setting up an inquiry under Sir Roy Griffiths. It then took some while for the Government to make up their mind what to do about that excellent report. Then, at last, 10 years late, we had an Act of Parliament addressing the issues, and its implementation was delayed. Therefore, it is not unreasonable for hon. Members on both sides of the House to be worried about the rumours that there could now be further delay.

I want to ask three questions which echo some of the issues that have already been mentioned by hon. Members. I know that the Government will want to take the questions seriously. Given the rumours, I am sure that they will want to take this opportunity to put the record straight and to reassure those who are worried. I am sure that Ministers are worried by the rumours.

First, will the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 be implemented fully, and as originally stated, on 1 April 1993? If the answer is yes, as I hope it is, it is easy for Ministers to tell us that tonight. That would reassure the elderly, their families, the professions and social service departments.

Secondly, are the Government satisfied with the quality and nature of the community care plans now coming forward? They will now have had an opportunity to study them. I have had an opportunity of studying several dozen, and many could not be regarded as plans as such. They contain broad statements of intent, sometimes repeating the broad statements in the White Paper and many good statements of philosophy, saying broadly what they would like to happen. However, I do not regard them as plans. Are the Government satisfied with that process?

Thirdly, those plans may not be real business plans, because of the question of resources. How can one draw up a proper plan if one does not know what money can be spent? A Conservative Member made a sound point when he said that a company would not try to draw up a plan without an idea of the resources available. I am sure that this will be taken seriously by the Government, because the Conservative party is the party of private enterprise, and no doubt wants to run the Government as efficiently as the best companies. If it is not sensible for ICI or Glaxo to draw up business plans without an idea of how much can be spent in the forthcoming financial year, why does the Department of Health expect major organisations such as social services departments to draw up such plans?

I invite Ministers to state clearly the financial arrangements that the Department of Health wishes to make. Will Ministers also confirm the existence of the working party on financial arrangements, known as the algebra group? Will they further confirm that the working party's officials are having some difficulty with the algebra? In the new spirit enunciated by the Prime Minister, will they state whether the working party's report will be published? There can be no state secrets.

I was grateful for the broad way in which the Minister introduced the debate, because we cannot sensibly discuss this important Bill, which we all support, without considering its context. We have perhaps a few months left to get the policy right. All too often, it has been the sad experience of our social history that it takes some tragedy or case of abuse, and sometimes death, before institutions —including, with respect, the House and Government— act.

The sad history of child care since the last world war is that it has taken tragic, sad and well-known cases of children being murdered before Government and the rest of society took the issue seriously. We already know of cases of abuse, which can occur in publicly and privately owned residential accommodation and, perhaps most

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sadly, in the home where carers are caring for the cared for. We would all stand condemned if we provided resources for the important subject of community care only when public opinion was galvanised and shocked by cases of abuse and tragedies, which perhaps occurred because carers could stand it no more, such were the pressures and the lack of support that they were receiving, often because resources were not available.

It will be a real test of our judgment and collective wisdom to see whether we can rationally analyse the situation and bring passion to bear on it. We have the evidence and experience to force Government—I mean that in a most decent way—to find the resources, to help the Department of Health to get those resources from the Treasury. We all have an interest in ensuring that.

Perhaps we are at a turning point and soon will truly be able to say that this is the first chapter in which we start to turn the story of community neglect into a decent story of true community care.

6.52 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): We should all be grateful to the Danish people for giving us an opportunity to speak about this important subject. We hope that the Government will bear that in mind and will not try to resurrect the discredited Maastricht Bill. That will give us more opportunity to debate important issues such as community care.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) in thanking the Minister for the way in which he introduced the Bill, which has a narrow base but wider applications, as it amends a number of community care issues. The House is grateful for his introducing it with that in mind, as it has enabled hon. Members to speak in general terms about this important subject.

Labour Members agree that expenditure on community care should be ring-fenced. Why do we say that? We do not share the startling view of the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), who said that he had faith in local authorities spending the money allocated to community care according to that definition. That view is not shared by the Government on a wide range of local government activities, and I dare say that the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East would share the Government's view of, for instance, schools opting out of local authority control to avoid local authority expenditure allocation.

Local authorities, having experienced cuts in rate support grant and revenue support grant since 1979, are faced with invidious and difficult priorities. Will they be forced to spend money on housing homeless persons, or will they improve community care by housing homeless persons who have been thrown out of hospitals for the mentally handicapped which have been closed on the pretext of community care? Will they incur expenditure under the Education Act 1981 by statementing children with special needs who will be required to have those needs provided?

Those are the priorities that local authorities face. The Government cannot therefore apply the usual formula against ring fencing, which is that the priorities are determined by the local authority and it is its responsibility entirely, thus evading the real point—that the Government, by making cuts, have stretched the services that local authorities provide while local authorities have taken the blame for their allocation of priorities. It is an invidious position for local councillors.

One of the great advantages of a local authority making decisions is that it is accountable through the democratic process with which we are all familiar. Hon. Members who have been active in local authorities and who have taken part in local authority elections will be aware of that accountability. There is no such accountability in the private sector, to which the Minister paid lip service in his opening remarks in a quite extraordinary way. He said that it was, as it were, the pacemaker of community care. That simply is not true.

Where community care is operated for private profit, the tendency will be to cut expenditure and maximise income in order to maximise profit. Private sector carers will so operate unless they are subject to strict inspections, but local authorities must, of course, bear the cost of ensuring that such inspections are made. That further cost is not recognised by the Government.

Under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, local authorities are having to bring their own homes up to a standard higher than in the private sector so that they can examine old people's homes objectively and so that home owners cannot say, "The local authority homes are in an inferior condition, so how can they judge us?"

The Government have not recognised that cost, which local authorities are having to bear. The Labour-controlled local authority in Bradford took over from the Conservative council, which was trying to sell homes and people lock, stock and barrel. It failed to do so, but the Labour-controlled local authority embarked on a programme of updating and improving local authority homes. It has been able to do so only by selling its properties—very reluctantly—which were declared as surplus. That revenue is being used for modernisation and improvement. The Government are not providing enough resources. They should face up to their responsibilities and allocate money for community care.

It is important that the Bill is passed, to allow local authorities more flexibility. Schedule 8 of the National Health Service Act 1977 must not be narrowed, because in certain circumstances local authorities could be required to pick up the pieces for the private sector. We have not examined that very closely today, but we should do so, especially in view of the Minister's rabid obsession with supporting the private sector at the expense of the public sector. We should point out to him that the legislation contains the seed of rescue patterns which may be necessary because of the difficulties that the private sector might face.

I cite a specific example for which the Bill is tailored. It involves Westwood hospital in my constituency—a hospital for the mentally handicapped, now called people with learning difficulties. I must say that parents and people who work in the hospital do not like the new nomenclature, because they think that it is an attempt to cover the problem with words and to make it seem that things are not so difficult as they are.

Westwood hospital has been subject to a programme of putting people into the community for many years. In the first instance, the local authority was involved but the programme was more or less a disaster. It was called

"Operation Springboard", and it did not work. I recall that two people who were released into the community from Westwood hospital came to see me. They had been trying to get grants from the Department of Social Security for more than 12 months. They had had a difficult experience and received form after form which bemused them. They came to me to get things sorted out and I managed to do so.

I am in contact with many of the people who work at Westwood hospital and many of the parents, so it occurred to me to ask the two people whether they could read or write. They could not. They had been going to a DSS office for 12 months, but nobody had asked them whether they could read or complete the forms being poured out to them. They were subject to care in the community, but clearly there was no care in the community for them. Incidentally, the arrangement ended in violence, and both went back to Westwood hospital.

One problem with care in the community that the Government must face is that their cutbacks to local authorities and to district health authorities are forcing district health authorities to sell hospital sites. When the sites are gone and a difficulty arises with the care in the community programme because of a difficulty with or a wholly mistaken assessment, where are people to go if there are no havens such as Westwood hospital? The Minister should answer that question, but I do not think that he, his civil servants or anybody else in the Department of Health or the Department of Social Security have troubled about it.

I revert to the example in greater detail because it is relevant to the legislation. Westwood hospital has been subject to a care in the community programme for many years. In 1988, it was agreed that the Westwood hospital site would become the site of a mixed community development. It is a green site of 30 acres or more in which people can walk around. It is like a college site in that it has security—I do not mean fixed gates or doors, but security from traffic. There are speed humps so that cars cannot speed around. It offers a tranquil existence which people who are mentally handicapped frequently need. Indeed, it offers the sort of tranquil existence that most of us need from time to time, especially when we have been in this place a few years.

In 1988, in evidence to a planning inquiry about the Westwood site, the district health authority said:

"In the event, the proposed phased movement of patients into the community in accordance with the "Springboard Project" did not prove successful. The Health Authority is nevertheless still firmly committed to the essential policy of care in the community. At Westwood, this will now be achieved by the creation of sites for housing whereby certain numbers of the houses will be reserved for use by the Health Authority by agreement with the developers."

It was clear that it was to be a mixed site. It continued:

"In this way, normal cross sectional communities will be created in which people with a mental handicap presently in the hospital, will be allocated domestic living units. The environment so produced will encourage the return of residents to the pattern of daily life. These proposals will have the effect of bringing the community to Westwood Hospital, in the form of a mixed housing development plan. The funds released from the sale of housing land will be allocated to capital works within the Yorkshire region although benefits will generally accrue to the Bradford area wherever possible.

It is fully anticipated that there will be continued health care facilities and staff support. For example, certain of the more modern buildings within the hospital complex will be retained as community units such as a day care centre providing for 24 to 40 people."

That policy, presented to obtain planning consent, secured the consent but was then reneged on in a disgraceful and despicable way. The whole site is to be sold and only the nurses' home is to be converted to a 20-bed unit. That is absolutely disgraceful, and it is one of the reasons why my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) finds that people are cynical and have become disillusioned and disenchanted with administrative institutions which make fine promises but then renege on them and spurn the carers, many of whom are aging people growing weary of looking after their mentally handicapped children, often with great devotion. The plans that they supported are torn up virtually in their faces.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I think that my hon. Friend is aware that I have had correspondence with a number of people about Westwood hospital. I am personally familiar with one or two parents who have long fought for a proper resolution to the problem. The information provided by my hon. Friend shows what a kick in the teeth there has been for people who have struggled for a long time with handicapped members of their family who were involved with Westwood hospital. However, the experience that he described is not happening only at Westwood.

I commend to my hon. Friend a press conference to be held in the House next Wednesday morning in the Jubilee Room. It is organised by Values into Action, an organisation concerned with exactly the type of experience that he outlined. Such events are happening not only in Bradford but across the country, and my hon. Friend is right to point them out to the Minister who must deal with them.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right. RESCARE is a national organisation devoted to retaining the high standard of residential care in the public sector at sites such as Westwood which are decent and potentially marvellous sites.

I have a letter from Bradcap—Bradford and District Care and Protection for Mentally Handicapped People—a group battling for parents and for people living at Westwood hospital. The organisation is very worried about the lack of development of Westwood's potential and about Westwood being abandoned and discarded. The letter states:

"At a recent meeting organised at Westwood by the Community Health Council over 100 people attended and we were overwhelmingly in favour of Bradcap's plan, i.e. Retention of some land at Westwood including the excellent Recreation Hall, Occupational Therapy Unit, Hydrotherapy Pool, etc.

The replacement of wards with more home-like bungalows. A sheltered environment for some of the mentally handicapped who need it for reasons of behavioural problems or vulnerability.

Parents do not want their children at risk or as a stock in trade for ambitious businesses."

That last sentence is a fair comment about the privatisation of provision for people who, whether they are mentally handicapped or elderly, are among the most vulnerable in our community.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would help to solve some of the important problems that he has mentioned if the Government, even before introducing the Bill, fully implemented the representation sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, so that the people he

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

mentioned would be properly represented when decisions affecting them were taken? Does he recall that that course of action was firmly supported by the Spastics Society?

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. One of the key areas about which my local organisation is concerned is the representation which should be invoked by legislation, but which has not been invoked so far.

At the meeting at Westwood hospital mentioned in the letter, when about 100 people were present to discuss the proposed closure of the hospital and the disgraceful selling of land, because nobody else thought of doing so I asked for a vote. Out of more than 100 people present, only two voted against the proposals which I have outlined, in which some sort of mixed use of the land would be retained.

I shall deal directly with the Bill now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the greater flexibility for local authorities which it will retain—except for what is termed a lacuna. That means that a draftsman got it wrong and made a mess of things—but calling it a lacuna makes it sound so much better. If a plumber or an engineer had done that, he probably would have been sent down the road, sacked for having made a mess of the job, but that does not happen when the result is a lacuna rather than broken equipment.

The Bill rectifies the lacuna by providing local authorities with more flexibility. The district health authority is now decanting patients from Westwood in pursuit of an utterly unscrupulous policy, so great dangers arise. I have been finding out where the patients will be allocated. About 120 of them will go to a company called AHP Rehabilitation Ltd.

That firm made clear in its latest company returns that it is dependent on continued finance from the banks to stay in business. That is true for that private company. In fact, it is true for all private companies, as the case of Olympia and York—which was in a bigger way of business than AHP Rehabilitation Ltd.—demonstrates. With Olympia and York, all that happens is that the building stays empty——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying. I hope that he will confine himself as closely as possible to the Bill. I appreciate that the Minister's remarks may have extended the scope of the debate on the Bill, but talking about Olympia and York is taking things too far.

Mr. Cryer: Perhaps I could draw your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the flexibility which the Bill restores. I am trying to explain that, if AHP Rehabilitation Ltd. gets into financial difficulties because the bank pulls the rug, the question will arise: who will pick up the pieces? Without the Bill, local authorities would not be an alternative choice. That is the problem. I asked the so-called chief executive of the district health authority exactly what provision the authority would make. Would there be a guarantee? Have funds been put to one side? I am still waiting for the answers. The Bill provides important background information, so that we can say that the local authority, with the backing of the legislation, will be an alternative organisation if the district health authority—that authority is going down a funny road, as I shall illustrate with two further examples—simply has not obtained guarantees and cannot provide the facilities.

That opportunity is important. Without it, I am afraid that, if AHP Rehabilitation Ltd. goes into liquidation, it is not known what will happen to the 30 or 40 patients involved. We are trying to provide some certainty about that.

Another group of patients will go to a firm called Care Solutions Ltd., which was formed as recently as October 1991. It has no background of care in the community, or of financial success to give the certainty that we should like to provide. Indeed, the company was formed so recently that there are no company returns. If the parents of mentally handicapped people who went into that company's care wanted to get hold of the directors to raise issues with them, they might have a problem. Three of the directors live in London, which may not be too convenient, but the fourth—a Mr. Pietro Fascioni—is an Italian national living in Lugano in Switzerland. It would be fairly difficult for a parent to get hold of that director and say, "There is trouble down at the home."

The director lists his occupation on the company returns—as he is bound to do. His occupation is not that of a doctor, a consultant or anyone experienced in care in the community. That director lists his occupation—in the way which the Minister considers so wonderful—as "entrepreneur". People are being handed over to the care of an entrepreneur called Pietro Fascioni who lives in Lugano in Switzerland. The company may get into financial difficulties. We hope that it does not, but if it does, no capital background has been given and it has no records. So is it not reasonable that the local authority should be given the means, through ring fencing expenditure, to pick up the pieces so as to help protect some of the most vulnerable people in our society?

Mr. Hinchliffe *rose——*

Mr. Cryer: I shall finish my illustration first, and give way to my hon. Friend in a moment.

The district health authority is even going back to mediaeval times; it is handing over more patients to an order of monks called St. John of God. Those people may have a perfectly decent record, but I wonder what is happening in our society when we are handing people over to a religious order to look after. If we are handing people over from the district health authority and its tender mercy, we should do so to someone with some degree of democratic accountability, such as a local authority. The Bill will help to bring that about.

Mr. Hinchliffe: My hon. Friend should be clear that the Bill as it stands needs amending to allay his worries about people such as the gentleman who he mentioned who lives in Switzerland. I am concerned about the limitations on the requirement to check out the owners and managers of homes in the private sector. I have come across several examples where people with what I can only describe as semi-criminal backgrounds are now directly involved in the private care business. Does my hon. Friend agree that, when the Bill is in Committee, it would be useful to amend it to block the loopholes which allow such persons to be involved in caring for vulnerable people?

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is wise to point that out, and I have taken the matter up. I do not want local authorities to have to use the measures that we are considering—to ask the Government for money to pick up the pieces. The local authority should be concerned with

other things, but we know full well that, when things go wrong in the private sector, it is always the community at large which picks up the pieces. Whether it involves a factory closing and people going on the dole, or anything else, we all pay. For example, in the case of Olympia and York, 2,000 civil service jobs are to be moved—but I had better not go down that path, Mr. Deputy Speaker, except by way of illustration. People from the Department of the Environment may have to pick up the pieces.

It is important, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) said, that if we are to have legislation, we might as well tag on to it additional advantages which will enable us to try to prevent the circumstances in which pieces occur and in which the whole thing breaks up.

I have been on to the so-called "chief executive" of the district health authority to ask him what guarantees there are and how Mr. Pietro Fascioni fits into the picture—whether he is approved and whether he is more than an entrepreneur—but I am still not getting any answers. I believe that the health authority has been inefficient, careless and far too precipitate in decanting patients from Westwood hospital because it wants to sell it off.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is he in the Mafia?

Mr. Cryer: One hesitates to make a judgment, but with a name like Fascioni, it sounds a bit like it.

With all the difficulties, the Government should be prepared to allocate more resources to local authorities so that they do not face difficult competing priorities such as I have mentioned. Local authorities must have the opportunity to take over, if necessary, the care of people who are in private rest homes for the elderly or in homes in the community for the mentally handicapped.

The Minister's predecessor was not especially helpful. He agreed with the idea of village communities for the mentally handicapped on hospital sites, but he gave no support to the objectors to the closure of Westwood hospital. The best solution would be to revert to the policy that the district health authority advocated at a planning inquiry in April 1988. The proposal was for a mixed development on the site which would keep tranquillity for people who are mentally handicapped. Some part of the site could be developed, but we should ensure that we do not put people into the community without adequate resources and without an adequate reserve if the community resources are faulty or the assessment mistaken.

The people who work at Westwood hospital, and the parents of the patients there, feel that they have been badly betrayed by the move to so-called care in the community. They feel badly betrayed by the district health authority and by the Government because the Government have not allocated the necessary resources. It is about time that these bankrupt policies were changed.

7.22 pm

Mr. Rooker: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) made the point that we in the House owe a great debt to the people of Denmark for allowing us to have a short debate on community care in prime time. I say that in all seriousness. This is the first debate in the House on community care since April 1991. If nothing else, I hope that it will send signals to the Minister, to his colleagues and to his advisers that there is an unmet need and a pent-up desire in hon. Members of all parties who are concerned about what will happen before April next year and who want to raise many issues. We must respond to the points raised, although I accept that we cannot respond to all of them in Committee, which will probably be the week after next.

The Government will make a rod for their own backs if they do not introduce their own proposals from time to time rather than leaving the task to the Opposition on Supply days, because there are not enough of those days. The Government could then give reports to the House about the preparations, the decisions being made and the planning for the implementation of the community care reforms next year.

It is no good simply waiting until April 1993—waiting for problems to arise and then having loads of requests for emergency debates under Standing Order No. 20. I hope that the Government will meet the demand for information and the demand to share the experiences of the planning of the implementation of community care which have been expressed in the debate.

I look forward to listening to the Minister and I hope that he will answer some of the questions. The one question that he must address is the first question that I raised, which has been raised by other hon. Members subsequently. We asked for an unequivocal and unqualified reaffirmation that the community care reforms will be implemented on 1 April next year.

7.24 pm

Mr. Yeo: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will briefly respond to some of the points raised in an excellent and wide-ranging debate. There were moments when I regretted having opened the debate with such a wide-ranging speech, because it appeared to bring everyone else into order almost regardless of what he or she said.

In answer to the last point raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), may I say that I noticed that, during the six days of debate on the Queen's Speech, the Opposition did not choose to address health or community care issues.

Mr. Rooker: Let us not waste time on this. The Queen's Speech did not refer to health or to community care. That was the Government's decision. The Queen's Speech did not refer to unemployment. We chose subjects that were mentioned in the Queen's Speech, so let us have no more time-wasting on this nonsense.

Mr. Yeo: It is not a question of time-wasting. I am responding to a point raised by the Opposition. If the hon. Member for Perry Barr reads through the Queen's Speech, he will see that there were references to health. It appears that they were not of sufficient concern to justify the Opposition choosing that subject for any of the considerable amount of debating time.

I welcome the chance to debate matters with the hon. Member for Perry Barr and I hope that he will not be reshuffled too soon. I start with the point about which he is so concerned. Many other hon. Members have raised it today and some have even referred to rumours that our community care policies will not be implemented. I am not aware of those rumours, which is why I did not refer to them in my speech.

[Mr. Yeo]

It may occur to hon. Members that the whole purpose of introducing the Bill is to put in place the last legislative brick in the framework that is needed to bring about the third and final step in implementing our White Paper "Caring for People". What other purpose would we have in introducing the Bill if we did not wish to go ahead with the policy? It is the third step and, as I said, there were two other important steps in 1991 and 1992, and the White Paper itself is only a small step in a substantial shift of policy which has been——

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Yeo: I will not give way in winding up the debate. My opening speech was very much shorter than the majority of speeches in the debate. I will try to deal with as many points as I can, and I will not be able to do so if I keep giving way.

The White Paper is but one component in a continuum of policy which is designed to achieve higher standards——

Mr. Clarke: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you help with a misunderstanding? The Minister referred to policies. He was specifically asked about the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. How can we persuade the Minister to respond to that specific point?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker—a different point of order. The Minister has said that he does not intend to give way in his wind-up speech, thus implying that there is a restriction on time for this debate. Will you confirm that there is no restriction on time for this debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is further to a point of order that never was.

Mr. Yeo: I make it clear that I will try to deal with the points raised in the debate which relate to the Bill. Unless I am to keep the House here for another hour or so, I cannot allow every hon. Member to intervene on points, most of which have no direct relevance to the Bill. I will try to deal with the points raised which relate to the Bill.

Several hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Perry Barr, my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) and the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne), concentrated on the question of finance. Of course I appreciate how central financial considerations are to the successful implementation of the policy.

I will make three things clear. First, the policy will be fairly resourced. Secondly, the transfer of funds from the Department of Social Security will be made in a transparent fashion and the basis of the calculation for that transfer of funds will be made clear. Thirdly, we will use the Government's powers to the full to ensure that when the money is transferred from the Department of Social Security no authority can misuse those resources.

I very much welcome the acknowledgement by the hon. Member for Perry Barr of the role of the independent sector and of the value of the mixed economy. That was refreshing to hear, and I hope that those views are shared by his colleagues. They did not seem to be shared by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), whose hostility to the private sector came through very strongly. We are grateful to the hon. Member for Bradford, South for continuing to articulate the old-fashioned socialist attitudes which ensure that Opposition Members stay in opposition.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr rightly mentioned the importance of other policies, including housing, social security and so on. I am glad to tell him that my hon. Friend the Minister of State already chairs an informal group of Ministers from other Departments dealing with the implementation of our policy. The hon. Gentleman also made an important point about the disclosure of interests. Under the Registered Homes Act 1984, local authorities are required to keep a register of all homes. The register includes full details of home owners and of any company or other organisation which is involved and which has a financial interest in those establishments.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr, together with the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), made a point about the availability of domiciliary services. I would not want to give the impression that we have not been making progress in improving domiciliary services. That remains a key objective. It is just as important as anything that we are doing in residential care. It is partly in order to encourage the development and diversity of domiciliary services that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced an initiative for local authorities to work with the voluntary and private sectors to develop new and innovative forms of service in the domiciliary sector. As I have said, I am particularly keen to see private sector involvement in domiciliary care.

My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) made an important point about the possibility of people moving either way in the spectrum. We certainly recognise that point. There can be a process of assessment followed by reassessment if people's needs change, and they can lessen as well as increase.

The hon. Member for Wakefield made some vigorous points. It is certainly a novel criticism that we are spending too much money on income support to provide better care for old people. The hon. Gentleman did not mention the substantial increase in social services expenditure, which is up by a third in the past two years and up by almost two thirds in real terms since 1979. If the quality of care which is provided by independent sector homes is inadequate, local authorities need not and will not contract with them; but of course those same standards can reasonably be demanded of local authority homes as well.

The hon. Member for Wakefield overlooked the role of assessment in the system. I do not share his view that voluntary codes are inadequate. I certainly am not convinced that a statutory framework is the right answer for specifying standards for what goes on inside homes. He also made a point about privacy. This is the first time that I have replied to a Second Reading debate with the benefit of having seen some of the amendments that will be tabled in Committee. There is an amendment on the subject that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, so I dare say that we shall pursue it in more detail in Committee.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst for his support. I have tried to respond to his concerns about finance.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) made a point about independent inspections. We already have

independent inspections in place, and we shall monitor them to see that they cover the points about which the hon. Lady is concerned.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) was kind in his tribute to me. I should not wish him to think that any of my past connections should lead to high expectations of what I shall deliver in my present job, but the hon. Gentleman has a great interest in the subject. On the Bill being confined to England, the position in Scotland and Northern Ireland is that the provisions on residential accommodation in Scotland and Northern Ireland were not affected by the lacuna which has caused amusement during the debate.

Let me assure the hon. Gentleman, however, that the process of assessment is at the heart of our policy. Our policy is designed to ensure that those who can remain at home will do so wherever possible, with the benefit of better domiciliary and day care services. I have noted his point about advocacy, and I hope that we have a chance to debate that subect in Committee also.

The hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) fell into the popular misconception that community care is to be implemented next April. As I have said, implementation is a long process, and next April is just one more step, although it is important.

My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who missed the first hour of the debate, made a lengthy and characteristically wide-ranging speech, most of which had nothing to do with the Bill, and has nothing to do with the Bill, and he has left without hearing the replies. I must refer to his speech, however. Nothing gives me more confidence in the success of our policies than to hear him express such great concern about 1 April 1993. He used similar phrases two years ago about the national health service reforms which are now proving to be the kind of success which I know this——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is for the Chair, not the Minister, to decide whether an hon. Member is in order.

Mr. Yeo: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield will read my remarks. I hope that, by that time, he will have had time to read and understand the Bill. If so, he will realise that it would not be appropriate for the Bill to increase public expenditure.

I assure the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) that we are already in discussion with local authority associations on a wide range of funding issues.

Other points can be picked up in Committee. The debate has illustrated the wide support for the Bill, and I invite the House to give it a Second Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Mauritius Republic Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

7.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is a technical measure, required following the change of status in Mauritius on 12 March 1992 from that of a realm to a republic within the Commonwealth. The Bill follows well established precedents and seeks essentially to ensure that the operation of our existing law in relation to Mauritius is not affected by the change of status. Some hon. Members have some questions which I shall be happy to answer, but I trust that hon. Members will agree that the Bill is non-controversial.

The decision to become a republic was, of course, for the Government of Mauritius to take and did not in any way require the concurrence of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.

The new constitution of Mauritius makes provision for appeals to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Hitherto, appeals from Mauritius have lain to Her Majesty in Council, but that is no longer appropriate now that Mauritius has ceased to be part of Her Majesty's dominions. The Bill therefore makes provision to enable Her Majesty in Council to authorise the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council to exercise the jurisdiction conferred upon it by the new constitution of Mauritius to hear appeals direct from the courts of Mauritius.

I am sure that hon. Members will be happy to learn that the Government of Mauritius have told the Commonwealth Secretary-General that they wish the country to remain a member of the Commonwealth now that it is a republic. The Secretary-General has consulted members of the Commonwealth, who agree to this proposal.

I have no doubt that hon. Members will join me in wishing Mauritius and its people a peaceful and prosperous future.

7.37 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Opposition Members have no difficulty in following the Minister's final words and wishing Mauritius and the people of Mauritius well for their future.

The Bill may be seen at two levels: the formal and the more fundamental. At the formal level, I wholly accept what the Minister said: it is a technical measure. Even if becoming a republic had been controversial in Mauritius —as indeed it had been, with two previous attempts by the Prime Minister to steer his country along the path to independence and his rejection of the Opposition view that there should be a referendum on the issue—it cannot be controversial in this country. It is a necessary piece of legislation, as the Minister has said, consequent on the decision of the Government of Mauritius in March to become a republic within the Commonwealth. The Bill was passed by the legislative assembly in Mauritius last year. The effect is that Sir Veeraswamy Ringadoo, the Governor-General, will become the non-executive President, and the Head of Government will be the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

The change brings the number of republics in the Commonwealth to 29, and reduces the number of

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

constitutional monarchies to 16. It leaves Swaziland, with its national monarchy, as the sole African Commonwealth country which is not a republic. That perhaps puts this measure in context. Hence, the change of status is not unusual in any way and, as the Minister underlined, it is wholly within the competence of the Government of Mauritius to change its status, as it will.

We are, of course, glad to hear that it is the desire of the Government of Mauritius to remain a member of the Commonwealth, the world's oldest association of sovereign states. It shows the flexibility of the Commonwealth that such changes can take place under its umbrella. Indeed, in a world where increasingly regions are developing into blocs, it shows the value of the Commonwealth to find it uniquely straddling all the normal divisions in the world and acting as a bridge between regions.

I said that there were two levels—the formal and the more fundamental. At the more fundamental level, it can be said that Commonwealth membership entails adherence to certain values, even if in fact for many countries they can remain only an aspiration. Those Commonwealth values were last enshrined at the last Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Harare in the so-called Harare declaration of 20 September 1991.

It may be of help to the House to spell out at least some of the principles to which each of the Commonwealth countries subscribed in Harare, and express certain anxieties about Mauritius. The Harare Commonwealth declaration said that the Commonwealth was a voluntary association of sovereign independent states, each responsible for its own policies. It also said:

"Its members also share a commitment to certain fundamental principles . . . Those principles have stood the test of time, and we reaffirm our full and continuing commitment to them today."

Those principles included

"the individual's inalienable right to participate by means of free and democratic political processes in framing the society in which he or she lives".

The declaration continued:

"we pledge the Commonwealth and our countries to work with renewed vigour, concentrating especially in the following areas:

> the protection and promotion of the fundamental political values of the Commonwealth;
>
> democracy, democratic processes and institutions which reflect national circumstances".

It also underlined the value of the Commonwealth in providing a means of monitoring elections and helping Commonwealth countries along the route to democracy,

"strengthening the capacity of the Commonwealth to respond to requests from members for assistance in entrenching the practices of democracy".

Those are the key Commonwealth principles, declared as recently as last October at Harare. The Minister here tonight and the Government of Mauritius will recognise that certain anxieties have arisen from the conduct of the elections held last year. Deep anxiety was expressed before the election by Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, leader of the Mauritius Labour party and son of See Woosagur Ramgoolam, who steered Mauritius to independence.

Dr. Ramgoolam appealed to the Prime Minister to allow Commonwealth observers to monitor the elections. He asked, for example, that the electors should be able to use their identity cards during the election, that transparent ballot boxes should be used and so on, because of his worries about the conduct of the election. Unfortunately, all his requests were rejected. The Prime Minister said in repect of Commonwealth observers, "Over my dead body."

In the event, the Labour party received 40 per cent. of the national vote, yet gained only three directly elected seats out of 60. It gained four seats as best losers. It emerged with 40 per cent. of the vote but only seven seats out of 64 in the legislative assembly. As the Minister is well aware, there have been several allegations of vote rigging during the election.

For example, in the edition of *L'Express* published only on Monday of this week, there is a quotation from Dr. Ramgoolam. May I say that *L'Express* is in no way allied with the Mauritius Labour party? He alleges that 4,000 votes were rigged in each constituency.

I cannot reasonably expect the Minister to respond to those allegations. In any event, there has been a reference to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. But the Minister should at least be aware of the allegations and, I hope, ready to express anxiety to the representatives of Mauritius when he meets them. I retrospect, it is sad that the Prime Minister of Mauritius was not prepared before the election to accept the reasonable requests by Dr. Navin Ramgoolam.

On perhaps a lighter note, one action of the Prime Minister subsequent to the election may commend itself to the Government. I understand that he has issued a 500 rupee bank note with his image on it. Perhaps more significantly, he has issued one for a mere 20 rupees with the image of his wife on it. I do not know whether our Prime Minister would be interested in following that precedent. Perhaps one might have a 50p Norma note. I suspect that our population would respond to that in exactly the same way as I understand that the bulk of the population of Mauritius have responded.

Having expressed anxieties about the conduct of the election, and knowing that this is a short debate and that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will certainly express other anxieties in relation to Diego Garcia, I finish on this note. As members of the Opposition, we accept that the Bill raises no point of principle in relation to United Kingdom law. With those few observations, I wish the people of Mauritius prosperity and a happy future within the Commonwealth family, as did the Minister. We value both our bilateral relations with Mauritius and the Commonwealth relationship between our two countries.

7.48 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): I begin by declaring two prejudices. My first is against republics, although not all republics. The republic of Venice was not a republic against which we should be particularly prejudiced. Also, I have to say that the United States of America, formerly one of the Crown dominions, has made a triumphant success of its period as a republic.

Human constitutional experience has taught us that a constitutional monarchy is the best form of government. It is the job of all statesmen, wherever they may be, to ensure stability, continuity and tranquillity, and those three principles have always been best met by a constitutional monarchy.

My second prejudice is that I do not like Her Majesty's realm to be diminished. One of the effects of the Bill will be to remove the Crown from the Government of Mauritius, albeit formally and constitutionally, rather than in any real sense. Nevertheless, the Crown will be removed from the constitutional expression of sovereignty in Mauritius, which will become a republic.

Having said that, I unequivocally welcome the Bill and the stages upon which Mauritius is embarking. My wife was born there, and my father-in-law served the Crown there as a colonial servant for a long time. My wife still has many relatives on the island, and her great-grandfather was its first archdeacon, when they were considered to be more important and useful than they are now.

I have had the honour of making two private and substantial visits to the island, and I also served as an officer of the British-Mauritius parliamentary group—alas, a group which is a great deal less active than it ought to be. I have some personal and family knowledge of the island, and I take this opportunity to say how well Mauritius has used its years of independence. If we are honest with ourselves, we will concede that not all the Crown dominions have made a success of self-government when they have become independent, but Mauritius has done so. It has successfully managed the transfer from one political generation to another.

I am bearing in mind the anxieties about elections expressed by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). Having regard to my prejudices about republics, if there has to be a republic it is best if it is one in which the president expresses the sovereignty of the country rather than being an active participant and promoter of its Government. If Mauritius becomes a republic along the lines of the Federal Republic of West Germany, the state of Austria or of Switzerland, where the presidency symbolises sovereignty, but does not lead the Government, it will be the best sort of republic. If a country has a presidency and a parliamentary democracy —as Mauritius has—it is more likely to make a success of republican government.

I hope that Mauritius will stick by the examples of countries that retain a presidency but also have a Prime Minister and a parliamentary democracy, as they are the most likely to secure those principles of statesmanship—stability, continuity and tranquillity.

There is no doubt that Mauritius has achieved remarkable successes since its independence in 1968. It is one of the most successful third-world countries. Considerable economic transformation took place during the 1980s. All credit to the Government and people of Mauritius for what they have managed to achieve, at a time when the common agricultural policy, among other things, has been making life difficult for the primary producers of agricultural products such as sugar. There have been special arrangements to allow quotas of Mauritian sugar into the European Community, but the massive production of sugar beet in Europe has not assisted colonies and islands such as Mauritius.

The Mauritians have diversified and followed many free market principles of economic management, and they are reaping the benefit. I noticed that there had been an improvement in the material condition of the people between my visits to the island.

Mauritius is an island of considerable beauty, with a remarkable coral reef, which manages to protect it from the ravages of the ocean in which it sits. Its people come from remarkably different cultural backgrounds and, on the whole, are making a success of living together in a comparatively small area. They have achieved a degree of economic diversification that is admirable, and the standard and quality of their lives has improved to an extent that is not only admirable and praiseworthy but a good example to other third-world countries which are trying to make a similar improvement.

From personal experience, I welcome the way in which Mauritius have been developing. I wish the Mauritians well in the years ahead as a republic, although I confess that I wish that they were not taking that step.

7.55 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): My experience of Mauritius is not so deep as that of the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), but I share his feelings about the warmth of the Mauritian people and the staggering beauty of the island.

Perhaps I should present my credentials for speaking. I was fortunate enough to be a member of an excellent Inter-Parliamentary Union visit to Japan and Indonesia in 1969, and was able to return via Australia and stop off at Mauritius. I did so partly because I had Mauritian friends from my student days in Edinburgh, and because the then Governor-General of Mauritius was that wonderful man, the late general secretary of the Labour party—Len Williams. I should like to think that he and his wife did a great deal to consolidate the good relations between Britain and Mauritius. Also, the unforgettable Ram—a tremendous figure—was a friend to so many of us in the Labour party at the time and was very kind to young Members of Parliament. I remember him with respect and affection. Therefore, like the hon. Member for Corby, I hope that I speak with warmth towards Mauritius.

I must raise three issues, of which I have given notice. I raised the first issue in the House more than a quarter of a century ago, at inordinate length. It concerned Diego Garcia and the Ilois people. The brief background is this: the Ilois are a small minority of about 2,000 people, who were formerly residents of Diego Garcia in the Indian ocean. They are now resident in Mauritius. The Chagos islands were inhabited from about 1776 by a fishing company and leper colony under French rule. After the Napoleonic wars in 1815, they, along with Mauritius, came under British colonial rule and received new immigrants from Africa and India, and a successful copra industry. Those varied peoples developed a distinct culture and a Creole dialect.

Hopping a couple of centuries brings us to December 1966 and to the period preceding the independence of Mauritius. Britain demarcated the Chagos and other isolated islands from Mauritius as the British Indian Ocean Territory. Incidentally, the British Government of the day were a Labour Government. I am in no way criticising a Conservative Government, because many of the unsatisfactory events took place—I make no bones about it—under the Wilson Government, although those of us who are deeply interested did not realise some things until the congressional hearings of 1975.

In the same month in 1966, the British Indian Ocean Territory was leased to the United States for defence purposes for 50 years with the option of a further 20 years. From 1972, three further agreements were signed between the two countries allowing for military construction and

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expansion on Diego Garcia, which had become the main United States base in the Indian ocean. That happened under the Heath Government. Those agreements meant that the Ilois people had to leave and that was undertaken in a most secretive, underhand and shame-making manner.

The Ilois had the long-standing custom of visiting Mauritius for visits and shopping. From 1965 until the mid-1970s, the United Kingdom Government did not allow the Ilois people in Mauritius to return home. In fact, the Ilois were forced to squat in the slums of Port Louis or work in sugar plantations—a type of work to which they were not used. They had very little money, so some starved and all suffered great hardship. It will be no surprise to hon. Members that they were particularly vulnerable to any type of disease; such diseases are fought off easily by those of us from populated or industrial societies, but are very difficult to combat if one comes from a remote island such as Diego Garcia.

The copra plantations were run down and food imports were cut. From 1965 to 1971, about half the population of Diego Garcia were pressurised into leaving. The remainder —about 800—were assembled and removed at short notice in September 1971, at first to smaller islands not required by the military and then, in 1973, to Mauritius where they were left without help or compensation. The removal was carried out in secrecy until the facts became known at a United States congressional hearing in 1975 and after media coverage in the United States and the United Kingdom. The removal was completed surreptitiously. Although it is not relevant to the debate, I wonder which Ministers knew what was happening. I have talked to some of my former colleagues who were powerful Ministers at the time and they said that they knew nothing about it; I am sure that they are being truthful.

There has been a long fight for compensation by the Ilois and their supporters in Mauritius and the United Kingdom. Compensation was given to the last shipload of Ilois, who staged a demonstration on the removal ship. A small amount of compensation was available from 1973 to the islanders, but they did not receive it until 1978. In 1976, the United Kingdom Government paid £600,000 to the Government of Mauritius for the resettlement of the Ilois, but that was inadequate and there were also delays on the part of the Mauritius authorities.

In 1979, the United Kingdom Government offered the Ilois a further £1·25 million, but stipulated that the Ilois must sign a document renouncing their right to return to the British Indian Ocean Territory. I accept that that document was signed, but we should ask whether such a comparatively simplistic people—I do not mean that in any derogatory sense—should have been asked, under pressure, to sign such a document. What moral value resides in that type of agreement?

After consultation, most of the Ilois rejected the offer. There were demonstrations in 1980 and 1981, and the British Government agreed that talks between the two Governments and the Ilois should take place. That was in June 1981. The talks, in London, centred on the need for improved compensation. The Ilois asked for £8 million in order to give land, a house and some cattle to each family. The United Kingdom Government offered the original £1·25 million only and an extra amount of £300,000 for technical assistance. No agreement could be reached, but the Ilois, who were now desperate, decided to ask for compensation at an amount somewhere between the two sums. A final agreement was reached—a so-called full and final settlement—in March 1982.

The terms were that the Ilois were to be given £4 million in addition to the money already paid, and that the Mauritian Government would give land to the value of £1 million and that the money was compensation

"for all acts done by or pursuant to the Indian Ocean territory order of 1965."

However, Mauritius saw nothing in the wording of the agreement to preclude a return of the British Indian ocean territory to Mauritius. What exactly is the position of Her Majesty's Government on the status of the British Indian Ocean Territory in relation to Mauritius as covered by the Bill?

Compensation did not solve all the problems of the Ilois. There were delays in the payment, and although it was originally hoped to establish a job creation scheme, the economic situation of the Ilois was so desperate that they demanded an individual share-out. After improving their housing, many Ilois had nothing left and suffered from the high unemployment in Mauritius. They also attempted to gain compensation from the United States, but to date they have not succeeded. Yet the Ilois today are better organised and gaining in confidence. Although they are settled in Mauritius, almost all of them have expressed a wish to return home.

I have had it confirmed today by people who know Mauritius intimately that that is indeed the position—the Ilois want, as much as ever, if not more than ever, to go back, even only on a temporary basis at first, for such human reasons as attending to family graves.

Is there any question of their going back to an island which is now a massive military base? Coupled with that, what is the future of the Anglo-American agreement? Although the lease is for half a century with the option of another 20 years, have the circumstances altered because of developments in the so-called cold war, or will the base remain because of possible developments in the Gulf or in such countries as Iran and Iraq? Diego Garcia was, in fact, the main American staging post during the Gulf war. I repeat, it is a massive base.

What do Her Majesty's Government believe are the rights of those people who have been dispossessed? On their most modest request, will they be able to go back at least to tend their ancestral graves? I am told that that means a great deal to them.

The position is not exactly happy. I do not expect a favourable answer tonight. In a written question in the other place, the noble Lord Kennet asked the Government

"Whether in the light of the changed international situation they are considering any alteration in the arrangements that currently govern Diego Garcia, and whether its most recent population (other than the personnel of the United States Armed Forces) has expressed any wish to return there."

In reply, Baroness Chalker, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said:

"There are no present proposals to alter the arrangements currently governing Diego Garcia. The former plantation workers (Ilois) are now largely integrated into Mauritian and Seychellese society. Schemes agreed in 1973 and 1982 to facilitate their resettlement (at a cost to the United Kingdom of £4·65 million) have now been completed."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 19 May 1992; Vol. 537, c. 28.]

To interpret that parliamentary answer, it said that, from the point of view of the British Government, that was the end of the story. Indeed, on 24 July 1990 I did not do much better when I asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

"what are his responsibilities in relation to the Ilois people from the British Indian Ocean Territories who are currently in Mauritius."

The present Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, then the Minister of State, Foreign Office, replied:

"None. All are Mauritian citizens, although some may also be British dependent territories citizens."—[*Official Report*, 24 July 1990; Vol. 177, c. 156.]

Then, on 24 October 1990, I asked

"what discussions he has had with the Government of Mauritius on the future of Ilois persons displaced from the British Indian Ocean territory resident in Mauritius."

The answer, again from the present Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, was:

"None. Those concerned were given considerable financial assistance to resettle and their future now lies in Mauritius."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1990; Vol. 178, c. 217.]

That was a hard answer, and tonight I am really asking the Government to reconsider it—[*Interruption.*] I think I hear the Minister saying that he cannot reconsider it. At least he can refer the matter to his colleagues.

I want to know about the future of the base. Is it to be American for ever? It was given to the Americans on the basis of a threat relating to the Soviet Union and the red army in circumstances which have changed considerably. I appreciate that it may be unreasonable to expect the Minister to make a statement tonight, but there may be other occasions when such a statement could be forthcoming.

For the sake of completeness, I should read into the record the observations by the Secretary of State on a petition of 12 April 1988 from residents of the United Kingdom for action to secure the return of the Ilois people to Diego Garcia. Responding to that on 9 May 1988, the Secretary of State commented:

"Before the creation of British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) in 1965, the status of the Ilois on the Chagos Archipelago was as contract employees of the copra plantation owners. Neither they, nor those permitted by the plantation owners to remain, owned land or houses. They were employees, with licences to reside there at the discretion of the owners, and moved from island to island as the work required. With the establishment of BIOT in 1965 the plantations, by now in economic decline, were purchased by the Crown. When it was decided to make the islands available for joint defence purposes to the United States and United Kingdom governments, the future of the plantations could not be guaranteed, and they were eventually closed.

The Ilois were given the choice of returning to Seychelles or Mauritius; the majority, some 1,200 people, returned to Mauritius where they had close ties, the last arrivals taking place in 1973. Payments totalling nearly £5 million were made towards their settlement. In 1972 Her Majesty's Government paid £650,000 to the Mauritius Government. After years of disagreement about how it was to be spent, the Ilois settled for cash in 1978, by which time accrued interest had raised its value to £936,000. In 1982 the Ilois Trust Fund was set up with an ex-gratia payment of £4 million from the United Kingdom government, the express purpose of which was to assist with the settlement of the Ilois in Mauritius as self-sufficient members of the community. This payment represents a generous, full and final settlement of the Ilois' claims. It was welcomed as such by the Government of Mauritius which, for its part, provided land to the value of £1 million. The Ilois community in Mauritius were fully associated with the Agreement, and its representatives took part in negotiations as members of the all-party Mauritian delegation. In these circumstances a meeting between Her Majesty's Government, the Mauritian Government and the Ilois, as suggested in the Petition, would be inappropriate and serve no useful purpose."

It may have seemed inappropriate in May 1988, but could there not, in June 1992, be a change of heart on the matter? At least the subject should be reopened, and I am asking tonight for that to happen.

I am not talking about some sort of Sue Lawley desert island but about a people's homeland and a culture which, I am told, has not gone away. Indigenous people have rights on this planet. I urge that those rights be respected.

The House will be relieved to hear that the two other subjects that I wish to raise, and about which I have given notice to the Minister, will not delay hon. Members, because yesterday I was fortunate to catch Madam Speaker's eye and raised—as reported in *Hansard* at column 878—the issue of the mangroves. In Mauritius as elsewhere in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, there are some lush mangrove forests with pristine coral reefs, which the hon. Member for Corby has seen and spoken of.

The combination of those two interacting ecosystems produces a vast amount of fish, shellfish and seaweed and provides sustenance and employment for local fishing communities. I gather that the situation in Mauritius is not so bad as it is in some places in the Indian ocean and the Pacific, where coral reefs are dead and mangroves have disappeared.

Considering how many people are now at Rio participating in important discussions, I am entitled to ask whether Her Majesty's Government, and the Overseas Development Administration, have a view about the protection of coral reefs and particularly mangroves. It is a highly important subject.

The third issue I raise concerns the situation of the Aldabra atoll, which I understand has an intimate connection with the Seychelles. A quarter of a century ago, I tabled more than 70 parliamentary questions on the subject. The Minister may consider that I have asked an undue number of questions tonight. They are nothing compared with what happened in the late 1960s when I was questioning the then Labour Government.

I sent those questions to eight leading Americans, such as Glen Seabourg, who was then a senior person in the Atomic Energy Authority and a friend of mine, to crusty old Senator Maclennan of Arkansas, to Ed Wenk, then secretary of the Marine Scientific Council, to Congressman Reuss and to Vice-President Humphrey, who was chairman of the Marine Scientific Council, who had been nice to me in Washington, just as he was agreeable to many other visitors.

They all sent those questions to Secretary McNamara, deluging him and asking for his comments. The final piece of good fortune was that the secretary of the Smithsonian, Dillon Ripley, was passing through London and I had the opportunity to see him at his hotel at midnight. He promised to take my questions to the President of the United States, which was his right as secretary of the Smithsonian. He kept his promise.

As a result of a combination of factors, and partly because of the excellent briefing by the late professor Sir Ashley Miles—it was the first time that the Royal Society had briefed a politician; he was the biological secretary—a head of steam was built up and it was decided that a staging post on Aldabra atoll would be a bad plan. Thank

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goodness it worked out that way, because it is a unique ecosystem, and since then it has been set up as a successful outstation of the Royal Society.

The story was further continued when the Royal Society, by amicable agreement, gave up its outstation to a combination of the Seychelles Government, with an input from the Mauritian Government, and the French and American academies of science. As I understand it, it is extremely well run and there are now proposals to have ecotourism of a very disciplined kind.

I would like to ask the Government in 1992 whether they have any locus in the problem of Aldabra. With the developments in Mauritius and, to complete the picture, it has to be said, in the Seychelles, are they certain that this unique ecosystem will be preserved for humanity as it has been during the past quarter of a century?

Aldabra is an extraordinary place, being unique not only for the giant tortoise of the Indian ocean but for the flightless rail and the pink-footed booby. What has defended this and made it all possible is its inaccessibility and the description of the coral as hard and sharp as razor blades. Long may that continue.

What I want to know is whether the advice from the Foreign Office is that all of that will be preserved for mankind or whether we may have problems of possible injury to this unique and important ecosystem. I thank the House for being patient.

8.21 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): I would not attempt to speak with the knowledge and experience of the hon. Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Corby (Mr. Powell) on the island of Mauritius, but obviously, a Bill of this nature, which involves constitutional change, is always a matter of interest to someone from Northern Ireland. I share the regret of the hon. Member for Corby that the decision has been taken in Mauritius to cease to have the Queen as head of state and instead to become a republic. None the less, that is its decision, and for us this evening it is simply a technical matter to approve the Bill or otherwise. Certainly the Ulster Unionist Members will be supporting it.

I too had the privilege of visiting Mauritius as the guest of its Government some years ago, when I was a Member of another Parliament. As has already been said, it is a most beautiful island. One of the things that really impressed me about it was the fact that it is multiracial and multireligious, and such a combination is somewhat explosive in many islands in the world—we can think of Sri Lanka, Cyprus or even Ireland. There is always a problem when one has a mixture of religions and nationalities.

There has been criticism of the recent election in Mauritius, and some doubt has been cast on whether it was contested fairly and properly, but tributes should be paid to the way in which democracy has thrived in the multiracial society in Mauritius for the past 25 years since it became an independent state.

As I said, Mauritius is a beautiful island. It is good to see its sugar cane industry prospering and to know that the fishing industry is going well, which is more than we can say for the fishing industry in the United Kingdom. It is also good that tourism is flourishing in the island. It benefited considerably when South Africa was cut off from much of the rest of the world. Mauritius became very much a playground for many South Africans, and that helped the tourist industry to thrive and develop. I would strongly recommend that people go there for a holiday. It is somewhat far away, but it is well worth a visit, and the food is very good. There is still a strong French influence in Mauritius. I suspect that most people who live there do not call it Mauritius—it is more likely to be called Ile Maurice—but that is by the way.

There is one final point that I want to place on record, which will always be a lifelong memory of my visit to the island—the fact that a young man from Wales, who obviously has the surname of Jones, has dedicated most of his life to preserving the pink pigeon in Mauritius. It had almost become extinct. Only eight living birds remained. He dedicated his life to maintaining that breed of bird, and I am glad to say that he is being successful. I am glad to have this opportunity to place on record a tribute to his work.

8.24 pm

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This has been a short debate, but certainly one of interest. My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) demonstrated how, in the British Parliament, there is always someone who has contact with and experience in every area of the world, just as there is always someone who has experience and knowledge of every subject in the globe. One might include the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), with his wide range of knowledge and the inquiry and interest that he pursues, under that heading.

Mauritius is certainly a success story. As my hon. Friend the Member for Corby said, and as the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) also commented, the per capita income of the Mauritian people in 1989 was just under US $2,000 per year. I expect that the figure has risen since then, but that is the latest figure that I have. That is a remarkable achievement for a third-world country with very little natural resource in a part of the world where per capita incomes are low and for a country which is isolated by poor communications, which Mauritius undoubtedly is. Mauritius is also a success story in terms of democracy since its independence.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) said that the Labour party supported the Bill, and I am grateful to him for that. But he raised certain anxieties which I have no doubt will be considered by people at a high level in the Government of Mauritius. I am sure that the debate will be followed with interest in the newspapers of Mauritius and that the hon. Gentleman's remarks will be read by a wide audience.

I cannot respond to the hon. Gentleman's allegations and criticisms, but I want to make one or two general points abut the constitutional arrangements in Mauritius over the years. As I say, it is an example of a small third-world country with historic connections with Britain, about which we all know, which has had considerable success in the path of democracy since independence.

The general election on 15 September 1991 resulted in a landslide victory for Sir Anerood Jugnauth's ruling coalition. As the hon. Gentleman said, 57 of the 62 seats were won by the ruling party, four Opposition Members were added under a best loser system, and all that is to be compared with 39 seats won by the Opposition in 1987.

The hon. Gentleman expressed concerns that have been raised with him by his friends in Mauritius and, in particular, the distinguished parliamentarian, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, the son of an even more distinguished father, if one may put it like that. I cannot comment on those allegations, but we understand that an appeal might come from Mauritius on the question of alleged vote rigging. We understand also that a candidate in the election has lodged an application with the Supreme Court of Mauritius for leave to appeal to the Judicial Committee, but that final leave to appeal has not yet been granted. That matter will be for judicial consideration, and I have no doubt that it will be properly attended to by whatever judicial forums it goes before.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow asked a series of questions. We are all aware that he is a campaigner of tenacity. He demonstrated that again tonight. An issue that he first raised 25 years or 26 years ago remains one that he pursues today. He never lets go. I am sure that we have not heard his last word on the subject even tonight, and that as long as there is breath in his body the hon. Member for Linlithgow will continue to serve as a distinguished parliamentarian—as he has done ever since I first entered the House, and I know before—and to raise issues about which he feels strongly.

I will make some comments, but I am afraid that they will not satisfy the hon. Member for Linlithgow as a fundamental change of Government policy. We are strongly of the view that the future of the plantation in Diego Garcia could not have been assured at any early date. Once the trade in copra with Mauritius ceased, there was no viable economy in the islands.

In 1966, the then British Government—which the hon. Member for Linlithgow honourably admitted was a Labour Government—offered the choice of resettlement in Mauritius or in the Seychelles. As most of the inhabitants of Diego Garcia maintained close ties with Mauritius, the majority of them—some 1,200 people—settled there, with the final arrivals in 1973.

The hon. Gentleman told the story as he understood it. I am sure that he was carefully briefed at the time, maintained his notes in his files, and has refreshed his memory. His briefing was certainly fuller than that which I received, so I cannot comment in detail on all the matters that he raised. Nevertheless, I can confirm certain facts.

There were two substantial ex gratia payments to the Ilois people—a sum of £650,000 first, and a further sum of £4 million in 1982. That constituted substantial compensation of nearly £5 million, which is presumably worth double today. The money was administered for the benefit of the ex-islanders' community by a trust established by the Mauritius Government, who agreed to make available land for resettlement worth £1 million.

Those funds were made available to a total of 1,200 men, women, and children, and should be viewed as generous payments. No one could reasonably argue that those were not generous sums of money for just over 1,000 people. On a per capita basis, the total produces a significant sum of money for each individual concerned.

Mr. Dalyell: I was asked by *The Sunday Times* to review Sir Sonny Ramphal's remarkable book, "Our Country the Planet", and I invite the Minister and his advisers in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to read those passages in which Sir Sonny argues at some length, and extremely convincingly, that no price can be put on rain forests. Equally, I suspect that there is no price that relatively simple people can be asked to put on their atoll. One cannot consider it in monetary terms—it is their being and their life. Their ancestors died there. One cannot say that they all arrived just like that—there were indigenous people there.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman shows himself the campaigner he is, in holding the view that one cannot put a price on a person's home in the way that I described the situation. However, the British Government have received no recent representation of which I am aware from the Ilois people. All the evidence we have—I know that the hon. Gentleman might challenge this—suggests that the bulk of the population are fully integrated into Mauritian society.

I cannot from this Dispatch Box tonight—the hon. Gentleman knows this—reconsider the answers that the hon. Gentleman was given. I am afraid that there is no possibility of the former Ilois plantation workers returning.

As to the mangrove swamps, the environment is one of our agreed priority areas for assistance to Mauritius. We note the reference in the Mauritius environmental action plan to mangrove swamps as nursery grounds for shrimp and fish. The problem has been properly identified in the eyes of the Mauritian Government, but it is not identified in the plan as a matter for donors' action. We have not been asked to assist in that area, so we have not taken a view upon it. If a request for assistance were made, we would consider it.

We are very active in other environmental areas. Management assistance is given by the Severn Trent water authority to the Mauritius central water authority, and in the next aid talks we have to agree a project for assisting the environmental development of certain northern islets. Both projects represent contributions to the Mauritian Government's action plan, and we are also funding a scheme to assist the mapping of state lands.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow referred also to Aldabra. During business questions to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House yesterday, which were my guide, the hon. Gentleman referred to the matter of Aldabra's status, which he raised tonight. I am afraid that I took that to mean Aldabra's constitutional status, not its environmental status.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister is quite correct: I did mean Aldebra's constitutional status.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I will comment on its constitutional status, but I cannot say anything about its environmental status—other than that I have some personal knowledge that Aldabra is a beautiful example of a pristine environment. The campaign against a staging post launched by the hon. Member for Linlithgow was described at the time by *The Daily Telegraph* as a personal triumph, and the hon. Gentleman should legitimately take some credit for the fact that no staging post was built on Aldabra.

The islands of Aldabra, Desroches, and Farquhar were returned to the Seychelles on their independence in 1976. They had historically always been part of the Seychelles group since the acquisition following the Napoleonic wars. The present constitutional position of the islands is not in

[Mr. Lennox-Boyd]

any doubt. As far as I am aware, there is no claim to sovereignty in respect of those islands by any Government against the Seychelles sovereign.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister has been more than courteous, and I thank him genuinely for the trouble that he has taken. May I leave him with one thought, however?

It would, of course, be fatuous to suppose that the Minister could make an announcement of substance tonight, but will he ask his colleagues, particularly the Foreign Secretary, whether they see a case for at least talking seriously to the Americans about the future of the lease—be it 50 or 70 years—in such changed circumstances? All this was done when the fear of Russia was still present. Now the ball game is different, and I should have thought that there was a case for at least reopening the discussion.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Again, the hon. Gentleman has made his point in his own incomparable way. I have no doubt that he will pursue the subject with vigour, as he pursues so many other subjects, but I can give him no undertaking that the Government will give serious consideration to the points that he raises.

I congratulate Mauritius on its achievements since independence, on sustaining a truly successful working parliamentary democracy, and on establishing a prosperous and rapidly developing economy. It has, on occasion, been described as a model for other developing countries—rightly, in my view. I am sure that every hon. Member wishes the republic a prosperous future—a future in which the friendly relationship that it enjoys with people in Britain continues, and in which the royal family are still loved, although it will no longer be a realm.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

8.44 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I thank the Minister again for the trouble that he has taken.

Let me repeat that indigenous societies, however small, have some moral rights in the latter part of the 20th century to return to their homelands—especially when the uses to which their homelands have been put have been changed by world circumstances. That should be borne in mind even in the case of a small and rather simple people.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Island Communities (Argyll)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.*—[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

8.45 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I am sure that it is a relief to the Minister and everyone else concerned that this debate is not, after all, taking place in the wee small hours, as we had been warned that it might. I therefore welcome the opportunity of raising the question of the Government's economic and social policies for island communities in Argyll, which is a subject of paramount importance to my constituents, to me and, indeed, to all highlanders.

There are many islands, large and small, off the coast of Argyll. Argyll derives its name from the word Erraghaidheal, meaning in Gaelic "the boundary of the Gaels": as he takes stock, the Prime Minister might do well to note that it was at Dunadd, near Crinan, that—around 500 AD—the first seeds were sown from which Scotland grew as a unified nation and state.

What I want to examine tonight, however, is the Government's strategy, or lack of it, in regard to the islands and their communities. Theirs is a sad history. There is the jewelled beauty of Jura, once populated with a people living a life balanced with nature, and now almost empty. I am told that Jura used to export 1,000 head of cattle a year until the clearances and the appearances of the "white plague", as the sheep were called when they were brought in. Then there are the deserted and lonely glens of Mull, the families who are leaving Colonsay because no houses are available, and the indigenous folk of Coll, now a minority. All have suffered the ravages of time, the infamous clearances, Governments without vision, and depopulation, with the resulting loss of language, culture and traditions.

My particular concern, however, is to bring to the Minister's attention the plight of the island of Gigha. Gigha—not a Gaelic but a Norse name, meaning, I believe, "god's island"—lies three miles off the coast of Kintyre in my constituency. It has a population of about 140, with nine children in the school. Some people are—or were—employed in agriculture, fishing, fish farming, the hotel, the shop and the estate.

Today, the island is in the hands of a Swiss bank as a result of the owner—a property speculator—going bust. The previous owner bought it for an estimated £3 million, and sold it in 1989 for £5·4 million; today, it is once more up for grabs at an estimated £7 million.

In the previous debate on Mauritius the Minister observed that one cannot put a price on a person's home. According to a director of the Edinburgh agents, Savilles, who are advertising the sale of the island,

"Gigha is very much a little paradise on its own. You would buy it for its charm and privacy, to own your own little country."

That says it all. There is not a word about the people who live in the place. I visited the island recently. The hotel has been closed. Padlocks are snapped on to the doors of other properties. The mood of the people ranged from anger to despair. Some felt humiliated. All of them were anxious about their future.

The Minister is aware that I wrote to the Secretary of State in March of this year. I reminded him that this was exactly what I had sought to avoid when I tabled

amendments aimed at controlling the sale of Scottish land during the passage of the Scottish Enterprise Bill in 1987. I wanted Highlands and Islands Enterprise to be vested with speedy and effective purchase powers to protect those living on Gigha from being exposed to the vagaries of a market that threatens their livelihoods and the whole character of the island.

I pointed out to the Secretary of State that

"the assumption that the island and its way of life could be used simply as collateral in the affairs of a speculative property empire was offensive to anyone with even the most primary understanding of the need to maintain continuity in the rural economy, upon which much of our social stability depends."

I said also:

"We shall never achieve a stable and equitable society in Scotland if this kind of market practice is allowed to prevail in the disposition of its land, perhaps its greatest asset."

During the debate on the Highlands and Islands Enterprise Bill, I was not talking about nationalisation of the land, or even compulsory purchase. In fact, I tabled a probing amendment on the powers of the former Highlands and Islands Development Board. I tried to persuade the Government that Highlands and Islands Enterprise should have powers relating to land use and its development, for the better quality of life of the people in the area. To have given Highlands and Islands Enterprise pre-emptive rights of purchase in limited cases, with suitable safeguards, to make better use of the land and to secure the social viability of a place such as Gigha was at the heart of my argument.

The Minister knows that Highlands and Islands Enterprise was given the general function of economic and social development, together with training and environmental improvements, but I maintain that it is not possible to do that effectively without considering land ownership and land use. The Minister will be aware of television and press reports which highlighted the fact that huge areas of land in the Highlands and Islands are often bought and sold by unknown purchasers, or are owned by shadowy, anonymous companies incorporated in places such as Liechtenstein, Switzerland and the Caribbean.

The laws and conventions governing land ownership in Scotland go back to the dim and distant past. Only a few people have a real stake in that land. The power of land ownership has had profound influence on rural land use and rural communities. Do not get me wrong: there are good and bad landlords, and those who are deemed to be good care for and feel responsible for those who live on their land. However, until a Government have the courage to tackle the problem of feudal land ownership, it will remain a running sore and a cause of deep resentment and bitterness. The English had the good sense to get rid of their feudal system hundreds of years ago, in 1290. For us to retain in Scotland the titles of superior and vassal in this modern day and age is beyond belief.

To return to my letter to the Secretary of State, I was surprised and not a little taken aback when I received a rather curt reply not from the Secretary of State but from the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton). Its peremptory tone leads me to believe that it was not written by the Minister, who usually deals with these matters in a more courteous and understanding manner. At the end of his very short letter he said:

"The compulsory approach"—

although that is not exactly what I was advocating—

"as Ian Lang made clear, is incompatible with economic growth and development."

What kind of an answer is that? Not a word was said about the social consequences. Reference was made only to economic growth and development. I do not understand how a Minister with responsibility for matters affecting the highlands and islands can adopt so irresponsible an attitude to the social economy of the island.

Even the most elementary understanding of the need for stability and continuity in a rural economy must acknowledge that to expose an island such as Gigha to unfettered market forces simply turns it into a shuttlecock for financial speculators. Failure to secure continuity in a rural economy such as this is one of the greatest dangers to its prosperity. That danger now faces Gigha because of the lack of an adequate policy over Scottish land disposal.

I had hoped that the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991 would allow us to have a second bite at the cherry. There are powers to purchase in order to establish nature reserves. The Minister said that these are powers of last resort, to be used in emergencies. I do not advocate that Gigha should be made into a nature reserve—far from it—but the island faces an emergency.

Scottish Natural Heritage was established in order to secure the conservation and enhancement of the natural heritage of Scotland, the flora and fauna of Scotland, its geological and physiographical features, its natural beauty and its amenity. Section 3(1)(f) of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991 also made it a duty of Scottish Natural Heritage to take account of the interests of local communities. How can SNH use the powers to protect the future of the island of Gigha? How are the contents of the Minister's recent letter compatible with the thrust of the Act which set out such admirable intentions?

The Government's stand-off attitude saddens me. Another example is the fact that the Kartli still lies wrecked off the shore of the island. Sadly, it was hit by a huge wave just before Christmas. It contains 400 tonnes of rotting fish which has not been removed and is now beginning to smell. The ship will soon break up and no Government Department seems to be able or willing to take responsibility for doing anything about it.

It is worth noting that this week the Government are going out of their way to rescue the investors at Canary Wharf in London by considering moving the Departments of the Environment and Transport out to that bankrupt development. Perhaps the Minister would consider moving a Scottish Office Department to Gigha.

I have endeavoured to acquaint the Minister with the problems facing my constituents on Gigha. I should like to suggest some solutions. First, he should purchase the island via either Highlands and Islands Enterprise, SNH or the Agriculture and Fisheries Department of the Scottish Office, which is already a landowner. Secondly, he should undertake a review of the laws governing land ownership in Scotland. Thirdly, he should agree to abolish the archaic feudal system.

By designating the islands of Argyll as environmentally sensitive areas, the Government have already acknowledged that they are of national environmental significance; that includes Gigha. How will the Government respond? What policy or strategy does the Minister have to deal with this? If the Minister's answer is negative, as regrettably I expect it to be, this Adjournment debate, if it achieves nothing else, will at least have served to show the prospective buyers of the island of Gigha the

[Mrs. Ray Michie]

commitment and responsibility that I, and I hope the Minister, would expect them to discharge towards the islanders.

9.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) on securing this Adjournment debate. I know that the economic and social well-being of the many small island communities in her constituency is a subject close to her heart, and her words will have struck a sympathetic chord with all who hold the islands of Scotland dear. In view of the many changes taking place in the hon. Lady's constituency, it is entirely appropriate that we should take this opportunity to take stock and examine the progress we have made.

I am delighted to be able to use this occasion to reaffirm the Government's commitment to the island communities of Argyll. This year, we have increased the budget for Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Government's agency for furthering economic and social development in the highlands and islands, to £77 million. In recognition of the particular problems occurring in the hon. Lady's constituency due to the withdrawal of the United States Navy from Cowal, this sum includes an additional £3 million towards the regeneration of the Cowal area.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise has responded by awarding Argyll and the Islands Enterprise, the local enterprise company concerned, the highest allocation of resources of any local enterprise company in the Highlands and Islands Enterprise network. Its budget of over £12 million has been increased by well over 20 per cent. compared with last year's budget. Thanks to Scottish Office policies, control over local matters is taking place at local level. Action to promote economic and social regeneration is being carried out by those who understand the area and have a stake in its future.

I have every confidence that Argyll and the Islands Enterprise under the chairmanship of Norman Walker will give priority to the island communities for which it is responsible, and will respond to local needs efficiently and effectively.

Our commitment to the people of Argyll and Bute is further illustrated by the substantial increase in the capital spending allocations that we have been able to give to Argyll and Bute district council for its non-housing capital programmes. Historically, the council has received an allocation of around £750,000 a year. We increased that to £825,000 for 1991-92, when it became clear that there would be problems in Cowal following closure of the naval base at Holy Loch.

Subsequently, we received the Cowal task force report. In the light of the implications of that report, we have increased the council's allocations further to £1·1 million for 1992-93, this figure being maintained provisionally for 1993-94 and 1994-95. An increase of 57 per cent. over the level of allocation the council received previously, amounting to £1·2 million over three years, gives Argyll and Bute district council greatly increased flexibility. I am delighted that we have been able to help, and I know that the council will respond in like spirit.

The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute said that the island of Gigha means God's island. I share her concern about the circumstances surrounding the proposed sale. The Scottish Office fully recognises how worrying recent events must have been for the people who live and work on Gigha, which is a lovely island with a population of about 150. Farming and fisheries, including fish farming, provide the main source of employment. The local hotel, which is well known to many visitors, is also important. This is a clear example of a fragile community on the periphery of Europe—precisely the sort of community whose well-being is treated by Highlands and Islands Enterprise as among its most cherished priorities.

I sympathise with those who lost their jobs, but we should not take a too pessimistic view of their situation. I am confident that, when the island is in new hands, there will be scope for their re-employment. Meanwhile, they are underpinned by the usual welfare arrangements and by the mutual help which is such a strength of Scotland's remote rural communities.

Tenancies are protected by the various housing and agriculture Acts. Farm leases are governed by the Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act 1991, under which a long-standing tenancy can pass to the successors of a deceased tenant. Landlords can serve incontestable notices to quit only where the successor is not a near relative. I shall be only too ready to look into any immediate cases of personal hardship on the hon. Lady's behalf. I feel sure that she will get in touch with me if I can assist.

For the longer term, I feel confident that Gigha will survive the present crisis. I know that Argyll and the Islands Enterprise fully recognise Gigha's problems of fragility and remoteness. It is monitoring the situation, and once the ownership position is clarified, it will stand ready to assist in economic and social development if and where a need is established. I understand why the hon. Member is so interested in the circumstances of the sale, but it is essentially a private matter which I am sure will be resolved by those concerned.

Highland land use has long been a particularly difficult and sensitive issue. Some appear to believe that all land in the Scottish highlands should be subject to a more or less compulsory purchase regime, under which a corporate body such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise had powers of purchase or direction. That power would be available if a corporate body believed that the land was being misused or neglected.

The Scottish Office is opposed to that approach. We believe that it is interventionist in character and that it assumes that corporate bodies are in a better position to determine how land should be used than those directly involved. We believe that land matters should be dealt with on the basis of consultation and mutual co-operation. We are confident that the future prosperity of the highlands and islands is best served by the removal of anti-competitive rules. We have no plans to introduce nationality or residence requirements for purchasers of land or property. The nationality of a landowner does not determine the quality of his management or the welfare of his employees.

This does not mean that we believe that the legal framework should be set in tablets of stone. At the Government's request, as the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) is well aware, the Scottish Law Commission is carrying out a detailed review of property law in Scotland, including an investigation into

the so-called feudal system. We intend to await the commission's detailed conclusions and recommendations before considering whether and what changes in the law are needed. That is still some time away; meanwhile, ownership matters should be resolved within the framework of existing law. Land ownership is not a matter on which I have a locus to intervene. However persuasive the hon. Lady is, I do not wish to adopt the mantle of paternalism in this matter.

The hon. Lady also asked about Scottish Natural Heritage. I shall make inquiries about whether it could conceivably have a role in Gigha, and if so, in what circumstances. If I may, I shall write to her about that.

The hon. Lady also asked about Kartli, the Russian vessel. We have taken an interest in the matter because of the implications for our environmental responsibilities. It has taken time for arrangements for disposal to be put in place because the owners responsible for such arrangements are from the new republic of the Ukraine, but United Kingdom lawyers acting on their behalf have appointed a salvage contractor to dispose of the cargo and vessel when the necessary funds arrive in this country, which we hope will be in the next few days. I am glad to confirm that there have been no adverse effects on the marine environment as a result of the incident, but we shall continue to keep a close eye on it.

I shall give some examples of assistance to island communities in Argyll. Practical assistance to island communities is a high priority of the Highlands and Islands Enterprise network. Projects which have been assisted in Argyll include the development of a shellfish farm, an adventure school, a chocolate factory, and workshop premises. Argyll and the Islands Enterprise in its first year of operation has in fact provided assistance towards 59 islands-based projects worth nearly £1 million, creating more than 60 new jobs. That is well above the job creation target which had been set, and it is a creditable performance.

There are also several large cases in the pipeline, ranging from tourist developments to environmental improvements. These are not isolated projects the Highlands and Islands Development Board, forerunner of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, long recognised the importance to island communities of economic and social development.

Assistance to cases in the Argyll islands has ranged from just a few hundred pounds in Tiree to tens of thousands of pounds in Islay. I am sure, for example, that the hon. Lady, like me, is delighted at the success of the Mactaggart Pool on Islay, an excellent example of a successful partnership of the voluntary sector, the private sector, public agencies and local authorities. HIDB also provided economic assistance to the refurbishment of the winter gardens in Rothesay, helping to retain a building of architectural value in a prominent part of the town. Argyll and the Islands Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise are following it with a new initiative—the Bute partnership—which has worked out proposals to regenerate Rothesay town centre.

These proposals have still to be endorsed by the partnership's main funding partners. Meanwhile, Rothesay has already benefited from projects such as the refurbishment of a hotel, creating 11 jobs, and the relocation and development of a food manufacturing business.

Perhaps it would assist the hon. Lady if I said a little about Cowal. The effectiveness of Scottish Office policies is illustrated by what is happening there. In little over a year from the United States Navy's announcement of its withdrawal from the base, the local enterprise company set up the Cowal initiative to prepare and implement an action plan for the area. The Cowal task force is now taking these proposals forward. Advance factory units are being built at Sandbank, the eyesore of Robertson's yard is being removed and the local swimming pool is being refurbished.

I greatly look forward to seeing these developments for myself, and I am in touch with Argyll and the Islands Enterprise about suitable dates. I will, of course, let the hon. Lady know well in advance when a visit to her constituency is arranged, and will be delighted if she will join me on that occasion, as she did when I visited Caledonian MacBrayne.

In the hon. Lady's constituency as a whole, Argyll and the Islands Enterprise is of course making a tremendous impact for the better. Its land renewal work at Oban is the largest single project of its kind in the whole of the HIE network area. Perhaps I could single out one general project which is of enormous significance for the whole of Argyll: the British Telecom Highlands and Island initiative.

This joint initiative between Highlands and Islands Enterprise and British Telecom is bringing enormous benefits to the Highlands and Islands. Throughout the whole of this remote area on the edge of Europe, access to the dial plus is now the rule. In terms of quality, the people of the Highlands and Islands enjoy a better service than, for example, anything available in comparable areas of rural England, such as Northumberland or Cornwall.

For business users, the system provides faster, cheaper and safer transmission of data. This facility enables distance or tele working, and reduces the obstacles once encountered by those working in remote rural areas, enabling them to compete on equal terms with those working in more accessible parts of the country.

The Government take every opportunity to stress the special needs of areas such as the islands of Argyll to the European Commission in Brussels. All possible steps are and will be taken to ensure that such areas derive the maximum possible benefit from European funding.

Argyll comes under the Highlands and Islands objective 5(b) programme, which aims to promote the development of rural areas. It is eligible for support from all three European structural funds—the European regional development fund, the European social fund and the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund, commonly known as FEOGA. Under the Highlands and Islands programme of community interest 1988-91, the island communities in Argyll have benefited by almost £4 million from European regional development funding.

Within the communications sub-programme, almost £3 million was approved in support of projects such as cattle grid improvements, safety fencing, and pier fender upgrading on Mull; road and bridge upgrading and strengthening on Mull, Islay and Bute; and ferry service improvements to Coll and Tiree. To provide water services, to improve inadequate, inconsistent or poor-quality water supply to remedy the lack of adequate sewerage facilities, almost £1 million of European regional development funding has been made available to Arran, Tiree and Islay.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

Tourism development is important to the economies of the Argyll island communities. In support of that, the European Commission has provided over £100,000 to develop a heritage trail at Tiree and the creation of a residential centre in the sparsely populated south-west of Mull. The Argyll area also benefits from the LEADER community initiative, which aims to encourage diversification in rural areas. Out of the £4·5 million allocated to LEADER in Scotland, £900,000 was earmarked to be spent in Argyll between 1992 and 1994. The island communities will benefit from part of that allocation.

All this means that, in European terms, the islands of Argyll are given substantial priority and recognition. I assure the hon. Lady that we will not lose sight of the European dimension when working for the well-being of her constituency.

I shall touch briefly on the ferry services about which the hon. Lady spoke so passionately when we considered bus privatisation. We recognise that many small island communities are almost wholly dependent on the ferry service for contacts and trade with the outside world. Ferry services provide a vital transport service for both people and goods, and are therefore vital to maintain the social and economic development of the islands and to facilitate the growth of industries such as tourism.

We stand by the commitment to continue to provide financial support to Caledonian MacBrayne for ferry services which are necessary to maintain and improve social and economic conditions in the islands. Examples of that commitment to the continuing development of ferry services to islands off the Argyll mainland are the new linkspans on Coll and Tiree, which will become operational in June and provide a much improved roll-on/roll-off service to Oban.

Later this year, a larger vessel will be introduced on the service to Gigha, with increased capacity for vehicles and passengers and offering a full roll-on/roll-off service. Next year, it is planned that the Kennacraig-Islay service will be provided, with additional capacity and an improved standard of service. Those examples illustrate the Government's concern, and continuing commitment, to make available the resources required to maintain and improve essential ferry services.

It is worth my touching briefly on the reform of the common agricultural policy, which is also important to the hon. Lady's constituency. Agriculture and fishing, of course, remain vital elements in the economy of the islands. I am sure that the island communities will be well aware of the significance of the recent agreement on reform of the CAP. In the short time available, I will mention only a few key points.

The most important thing to note is that, on balance, the CAP reform package holds out real, tangible benefits for the agricultural community in the Scottish islands. In particular, it offers our farmers some relief from the prolonged blight of uncertainty.

The agreement reached two weeks ago in Brussels marks a turning point for agricultural policy in western Europe. In future, support prices for cereals will more closely reflect market prices, and agricultural support will be channelled more directly towards the farmer. That support will increasingly take account of the contribution that farmers and crofters make to the conservation of our countryside. Consumers will benefit through lower prices.

The final terms of the agreement represent a tremendous achievement for the United Kingdom negotiating team in Brussels and especially for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The EC Commission's attempts to discriminate against larger farms were comprehensively dismissed. That will come as a great relief to farmers in Scotland, where our flocks and herds and farms are larger not just than the European average but than the British average.

The Brussels agreement includes a new premium for beef farmers aimed at supporting extensive production. It retains support for livestock farmers in the less favoured areas, recognising just how important farming is in our remote and disadvantaged rural areas. For sheep and beef, the new arrangements should help to protect the livelihoods of farmers in the highlands and islands who have, in recent years, suffered from the growth of livestock businesses in the lowlands.

Of course, that is not the whole story. Agriculture in the islands will continue to face financial pressures. If we are to retain viable farming communities, we must help farmers and crofters to adjust. For that reason, specific programmes have been set up for farmers and crofters in the highlands and islands. The agricultural development programme, for example, has been in place since 1988. Since then, around 300 farm development plans and a similar number of livestock development plans have been approved for farms and crofts in the Argyll area and small islands alone.

Those plans will attract grants of more than £5·5 million for farm improvements and new businesses. That injection of resources will have wider economic benefits. The rural enterprise programme, which we extended last year to parts of Argyll, aims in particular to encourage new businesses in those areas linked to the agricultural holdings.

In the view of the hon. Lady's keen interest in environmental matters, I stress that we have given a substantial boost to environmentally friendly farming in Scotland with the recent announcement to designate five new environmentally sensitive areas and to extend and improve the first two ESAs. I am pleased to say that one of those new areas to be designated will be the Argyll islands, which will include the islands of Islay, Jura, Coll, Tiree, Colonsay, Iona, Mull, Gigha and other small islands. That announcement and the inclusion of those islands have already been given enthusiastic support by environmental bodies.

In common with the existing ESAs, those new schemes will be tailored to the local circumstances to help conserve areas of landscape, wildlife or historic values. The designation will allow many farmers and crofters in these islands to take advantage of enhanced payments for positive environmental management.

There are many other matters that I could mention, but the hon. Lady has not touched on them tonight. I end by thanking her for raising these matters. I will write to her on the subject of Scottish Natural Heritage.

I am sure that, even from this brief debate, the hon. Lady will appreciate that the island communities of Argyll are far from neglected. Every opportunity is and will be taken to ensure that those communities are no less advantaged than the more central areas of Scotland. In

some ways, the islands of Argyll offer a quality of life unobtainable in mainland areas, which is why, if the hon. Lady invites civil servants to Gigha with great enthusiasm, she may find that more go than she expects. I have every confidence that Argyll island communities will continue to benefit from the Government's economic and social policies. I thank the hon. Lady for raising these matters tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes past Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 5 June 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Stag Hunting (New Forest)

9.34 am

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I should like to present a petition which calls for a ban on stag hunting in the New forest. The petition has been signed by 36,563 people. They believe that seeking pleasure through the pursuit, terrorising, exhausting and killing of New forest deer is barbaric and unacceptable and should be outlawed immediately.

The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of Citizens of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, sheweth:

(1) That Fallow Buck are chased to exhaustion and death purely for pleasure within the New Forest;

(2) This causes unnecessary suffering to the buck.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will take all such measures as lie within their power to make illegal the hunting of Fallow Buck with hounds. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

BILL PRESENTED

BOUNDARY COMMISSIONS

Mr. Secretary Clarke, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew and Mr. Peter Lloyd, presented a Bill to make further provision with respect to the membership of the Boundary Commissions, the timing of their reports and the local government boundaries of which account is to be taken in their reports: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Monday 8 June and to be printed. [Bill 11.]

Maastricht Treaty

9.35 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Do you read the *Daily Mirror*? It has this morning published a poll about a referendum on Maastricht. You have heard the exchanges here in the course of this week. You know what a wonderful week those of us who realise that Maastricht has been an unmitigated disaster have had. The poll in the *Daily Mirror*—a very authentic poll—shows that the British people are 7:1 against. Now we all know that during the general election the polls got it wrong. But 7:1—I ask you! There is a big margin for error. I think that there should be a statement from the responsible Minister.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is by no means a point of order for the Chair. It is nothing that I can deal with this morning.

Tenants' Rights

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

9.36 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): We talk a lot here about housing policy, but we need to be clear what and who matters in social housing—that is council and housing association housing. It is the tenant, the customer—people—who matter. Often it is the tenant who knows best. The basis of the Government's approach to social housing is flexibility, quality of service, choice wherever possible and, above all, tenant involvement. The best way to achieve involvement is to give the tenants the opportunity to make clear what they want. People know what they want. They also know that they do not want to be told what is best for them. They want to exercise their power to choose and we want to make sure that they have the power to choose. That is a message which the citizens charter sends loud and clear. As the Prime Minister has said:

"the Citizen's Charter is not a recipe for more state action; it is a testament of our belief in people's right to be informed and to choose for themselves."

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: If I may finish this point, the hon. Gentleman may have some comment to make on what I am about to say.

I am glad to say that it is not just the Government who have realised that people should have a right to be informed and the right to choose for themselves. In an interesting "Newsnight" exchange the other day during a half-hour investigation into why the Labour party lost the general election, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who is, of course, shadow spokesman on the environment, said that it was the Labour party's

"perhaps old-fashioned tendency to treat people in large groups as welfare recipients and I think people don't see themselves in those terms any longer. They see themselves as individuals exercising choice, freedom and power and they want to be able to be empowered to do that. That's the role of Government."

We all say alleluiah to that.

Mr. Fraser: Will the Government introduce a right for tenants to take over the management in the same way as they have a right to buy and, in some circumstances, to acquire freehold? My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and I advocated six years ago in Committee when we were housing spokesmen that tenants should have the right to take over the management. It was resisted then by the Government. Will the Government give that right, which cannot be vetoed by a public housing authority?

Mr. Baldry: I am delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman's comments because, if he bears with me, he will hear some good news about the right to management.

I want all local authority landlords to accept that tenants have a right to be involved in the running of their estates. More than that, I want all tenants to have the opportunity actively to participate. There is a clear link between quality of service and tenant involvement. Of course tenants, as customers, should command the highest standards of service, but large numbers of tenants are not content with that—they want more. They see participation as a way of taking a lead in transforming the quality of life for their community.

Although tenant participation in management need not involve the transfer of ownership of estates from local authorities, tenants have a greater say in the decisions made about their own homes and their own lives. To be successful, that requires information and the empowerment of tenants. Tenants have a statutory right to be consulted.

Consultation is more than merely talking to tenants; it is about tenants actively participating in the management of their estates—the point that the hon. Gentleman just made. Enlightened local authorities see tenant participation not as a threat but as an enhancement of service delivery to their customers. This is happening at an increasing pace; 47 tenant management organisations have so far been approved by the Secretary of State, with a further 44 in development phase.

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Does the Minister include the tenant's right to be involved in the allocation of flats and houses on their estates in his definition of participation, consultation and management?

Mr. Baldry: Allocations policy must be for the local authorities to decide. In areas such as the borough that the hon. Lady represents, what gives rise to concern is the number of units of accommodation that the local authority is having difficulty in allocating because they are lying void, or are occupied by unlicensed occupiers, about which I shall say more later.

Tenant management is not an easy option for tenants. Management of council estates is a complex business which requires specific skills. That is why the development of a tenant management organisation may take up to two years. It is clearly important that the training of managers is seen as a priority. We are providing funding for the development of the Institute of Housing's new national certificate in tenant participation. Aimed at housing officers and tenants, it is geared towards increasing the number of trained tenant participation workers. We are also promoting the national housing and tenant resource centre which, when it opens in 1993, will be the first residential training centre in the United Kingdom specifically dedicated to housing management.

Although the task of tenant management may be daunting, the rewards are immense and measurable; void rates reduced, vandalism reduced, litter and graffiti reduced and repair rates improved. All these are matters of concern to tenants and all are being tackled head on by local, highly motivated managers. I might mention, for example, the achievements of the tenants of Maiden lane in Camden. They wanted real influence over a wide range of concerns. They wanted a more active economy and a better life for their children and young people on their estates. While they were still working up their estate management board, which has recently been approved, the tenants on that previously depressed estate became actively concerned about youth provision and successfully sought Prince's Trust money.

Another commendable example of tenant management is Action 5 Tenant Management Co-operative. Those visiting the Meadow Well estate in Newcastle after last year's disturbances will see the people who run that co-operative patiently picking up the threads of their

community. Alderwood is a developing tenant management co-operative in Middlesbrough, where the tenants have demonstrated an eagerness and drive to become more involved in making their own decisions. The South Bank Estate Management Board within Langbaurgh on Tees is a developing estate management board, near to approval, where tenants want to take control of lettings, repairs, maintenance and the estate budget.

Practically every week we hear of new initiatives for tenants who want to become involved in the running of their estates. This week's edition of *Inside Housing* makes it clear that there are distinct benefits for councils seeking to change and that a growing impetus is coming from tenants. Working together has reached a point where there is no going back. As one tenant resident said in Kirklees:

"The council officers were very arrogant towards us at first but once they realised we were here to stay they completely changed and now it's a matter of working together as partners."

Another resident in Leeds observed

"We are full of praise for the benefits the association's new relationship with the council has brought not least in overcoming some older tenants' fears that to tackle the council is to invite the wrath of a faceless bureaucracy."

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Could the Minister be more precise about the definition of tenants? He talked about the benefits and advantages which derive from tenant participation and involvement, including bringing void properties back into use, and all hon. Members would agree with that. However, all his examples relate to local authority tenants. Does he accept that many private sector tenants face serious problems? What do the Government intend to do to encourage greater opportunities for participation by those tenants to help bring back into use many privately owned empty properties?

Mr. Baldry: The thrust of my speech is about tenants of local authorities and housing associations. The relationship between private tenants and their landlords is contractual. However, as my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning made clear during the general election campaign, there is concern about private tenants, and I suspect that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) and others will mention the large increases in registered rents, especially in London.

We undertook to review the guidance given to rent officers and rent assessment committees. I am glad to be able to tell the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) and my hon. Friends that we shall shortly publish a paper inviting submissions on the issue to be made to us, and we shall give hon. Members who are concerned about the matter the opportunity to make detailed representations.

I welcome the conversion of Opposition Members to participation.

Mr. Raynsford *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but not so long ago the Labour party was generally hostile to the concept of participation. When the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) was director of the Child Poverty Action Group he referred to the "serfdom" of the council estate. During the last Labour Government, in a report entitled, "Do we need council housing?", he observed:

"some people will argue that municipal housing as such is a very good thing. That certainly does not tally with my experience of being on a council for 4 years when we were not receptive to the needs of many ordinary families."

Mr. Raynsford: It was in the 1960s.

Mr. Baldry: No, in the late 1970s. The transition has been caused by the Conservatives taking forward philosophy and thinking, which the Opposition have had to keep up with. The National Consumer Council at the time described many council tenancy arrangements as "one-sided, primitive and incomprehensible". In an attempt to catch up, the Labour party began to publish many consultation and policy papers, one of which, as recently as 1989, provoked the comment from the liaison officer of Sheffield's federation of tenants' and residents' associations—one cannot get a greater monument to corporate socialism than Sheffield——

"Labour clearly hasn't spoken to the users of the service. To be honest, most of what I see here"

in the policy review

"is paternalistic garbage. It still boils down to 'we know what's best for you'."

I am delighted that that is no longer part of Labour party philosophy, but we brought about that transformation as a result of driving forward initiatives.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Let us get back to reality. Today's debate is about tenants' rights and participation. It refers not to council tenants, but, presumably to all tenants. Do tenants in the private sector have rights? I want to hear what those rights will be.

I have a specific question for the Minister. Until the general election, it was the Government's clear policy, explicitly stated by previous Secretaries of State, that councils should no longer be providers of housing. Do the Government still pursue that policy?

Mr. Baldry: The answer is straightforward. Tenants in the private sector have rights. They are clear, statutory rights set out in legislation.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's second question is also very clear. I understand that he was the Labour party's housing spokesman in the previous Parliament. He will have been involved in considering recent legislation. He will know that we see local authorities as being enablers of housing provision and as landlords. As enablers, they should liaise with housing associations to provide housing. It is a matter of concern that many local authorities and elected councillors do not appreciate that their role is an enabling rather than a providing one.

Mr. Soley: That is a dodge with a vengeance. The former right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury and all his predecessors as Minister made it clear that the Government's policy was to end the councils' role as providers of housing. Everyone has always agreed that they have an enabling role, too—there has been no argument about that. The issue is whether they should be providers. Is it still the Government's view that they should cease to be providers—yes or no?

Mr. Baldry: The answer is that local authorities are enablers and they, together with housing associations and others and the private sector, should provide. Their principal role, however, is as enablers. It is surprising that the hon. Member for Hammersmith, who was doubtless involved in Standing Committee debates in the previous Parliament, finds that concept difficult to understand. The primary role of local authorities is as enablers. Of course, they still will have—and many do have—a responsibility as landlords. It is of concern to us that many of them, in exercising their responsibility as landlords, are failing in

[Mr. Baldry]

that duty to themselves and to their tenants. However, their primary responsibility as enablers is to make things happen.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): In answer to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), my hon. Friend made it clear that the Government policy has not changed in that respect and that local authorities are not envisaged as providers. Therefore, the new build programme in local authorities is very limited. Will my hon. Friend's speech cover the Government's policies for ensuring that housing associations are able to build in every local authority area. I am particularly thinking of those in the south and south-west where there is a considerable shortage of low-cost housing for rent. Will my hon. Friend ensure that housing associations are able to take on those tasks effectively and speedily? He will be aware of the campaign waged by *The Western Morning News* in the south-west on releasing more capital assets to enable local authorities to build more houses. If local authorities cannot do that—some of us accept that that may have to change—housing associations must be able to do it.

Mr. Baldry: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. We have substantially increased this year's budget for the Housing Corporation to nearly £2 billion, which will substantially increase the number of units that it can build—up to 55,000 for each year in 1993 and 1994. Within that budget we expect it to allocate resources according to need, including allocating resources to rural areas. The Housing Corporation has a special housing programme for rural areas, in addition to the moneys that it would normally advance to housing associations in those areas. We also want to ensure that those moneys reach the smallest villages. It has a special rural programme for that purpose. We have made available special capital allocations to rural local authorities to assist them. Ensuring that there is an adequate and good supply of housing in rural areas is just as important as making adequate provision in urban areas. We must never forget that.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): In response to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), my hon. Friend suggested that the main thrust of his speech would concern the tenants of local authorities. Some of us are concerned about the way in which the tenants of some housing associations are being treated on matters such as repairs and prompt service. Will my hon. Friend deal with that during his speech?

Mr. Baldry: I hope that I have made it clear that I am concerned for all tenants—tenants of local authorities and housing associations—and what we want to promulgate in all our policy is best practice. I will say something about extending best practice to the tenants of housing associations.

For some years, widening choice for tenants and giving them more say in their housing has been a major policy initiative of the Conservative party and the Conservative Government. With the citizens charter, tenants' choice and involvement will be further reinforced through strengthened rights to repair and improve, estate action, housing action trusts, right to buy, rents to mortgages and leasehold reform.

In January, we launched the new council tenants charter. It shows tenants how they may get better value for money and higher standards of service from their landlords, what to do if things go wrong, and, most importantly, how they can take a more active role in running their housing. It provides examples of best practice and it is a framework of action by tenants and landlords for the future. The charter strengthens existing rights. In particular, we intend to introduce legislation for an improved right-to-repair scheme in the Housing, Land and Urban Development Bill this autumn. It will give local authority tenants a simpler and stronger right to repair than they have now for the most urgent minor repairs. Tenants would contact approved contractors direct when their landlord has not carried out a repair covered by the scheme within a specified target time and the local authority would pay the contractor direct.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Does the hon. Gentleman recall the mid 1980s when the original right-to-repair scheme, was introduced? Perhaps his hon. Friends would like to help him remember. At that time, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of District Councils went to the Government and said that the scheme would not work, that it would be a bureaucratic nightmare, that it would be impossible to operate, that no one would use it and that no one would benefit in getting better repairs. We in the local authority associations offered a much simpler, alternative scheme that the Government of the day turned down. Will the Minister tell us whether the proposed right-to-repair scheme is the one that was turned down by Ministers at that time? Is he intending to reintroduce it?

Mr. Baldry: The scheme that we intend to introduce will give local authority tenants a simpler and stronger right to repairs. That is what we wish to be achieved. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and Labour-controlled associations, such as the AMA, will be keen to co-operate to ensure that the tenants' right to repair is upheld and that the most urgent minor repairs are dealt with as speedily as possible.

We promised in our manifesto to give tenants a new right to improve. Currently, secure tenants of local authorities and housing associations can carry out improvements to their properties with their landlord's permission. When the tenant moves on, the landlord may decide to pay the tenant compensation reflecting the investment made in the property, but he may not. Few tenants of local authorities or housing associations take advantage of their right to improve and many local authorities do not use their powers to pay compensation. That is why we have decided to extend and improve the existing scheme.

We propose to place on landlords a duty to pay compensation to tenants who have made improvements to their properties. That will give tenants the necessary security to proceed, in the knowledge that they will receive proper recompense if they move to another dwelling. We are drawing up detailed proposals and will consult all interested parties later this year.

I am afraid that there are still many manifestations of bad housing management in the local authority sector, such as high void and arrears rates, long turn-round times between lettings, squatting, vandalism on estates and slow processing of right-to-buy claims. I note that the hon.

Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) has left the Chamber. Practically every week one reads of fresh difficulties being experienced by local authorities in carrying out their proper role as landlords.

This week's *Municipal Journal* reports that Southwark, which is London's largest housing authority, with nearly two thirds of its population as council tenants, estimates that 20 per cent. of its stock is illegally occupied. It is difficult to have an allocations policy if 20 per cent. of one's stock is illegally occupied.

Southwark's new housing chairman, Mike Gibson, is reported to have warned that Labour could lose control of the borough if the illegal occupation of council homes was not sorted out. He claimed that up to one in five council homes could be illegally occupied in the borough, he called for an immediate clampdown on freeloaders who did not deserve a council home and, with 55,000 homes on Southwark's books, Councillor Gibson said he believed that up to 11,000 homes could be illegally occupied. When it is borne in mind that there are currently 15,000 people on the council's housing waiting list, the fact that 11,000 homes are illegally occupied, in the largest housing authority in London, must be a matter for concern.

That is why we are introducing performance indicators. Those indicators are central to the improvement of housing management. I hope that the residents and tenants of Southwark—indeed, of other local authorities which have high void rates—will make it clear to their elected councillors that such conduct by them as landlords is no longer acceptable.

Mr. Fraser: It should be made clear that the phrase "illegally occupied" means, in that context, that the person whose name is on the rent book may not be the person who is occupying the property, even though that person is paying the rent. It is not the same as squatting—*[Interruption.]* I recognise that it is a real problem, but the Minister should be fair about it. If we were to get rid of people whose names were not on the rent book, we would have an equally difficult housing problem. I am not saying that we should be complacent about it, but the Minister should not give the impression that these are void or vacant properties or even properties that are not occupied by people in housing need.

Mr. Baldry: I hope that *Hansard* will record with care what the hon. Gentleman said and that all my hon. Friends who represent London constituencies will make sure that his words are carried far and wide in London. The hon. Gentleman is advocating that it is fine if one is an illegal tenant or occupant so long as one pays the rent. One can buy the keys from whoever one likes—if the caretaker is flogging off keys—providing one pays the rent. In that case one is okay. It is no wonder 20 per cent. of Southwark's housing is illegally occupied if elected representatives to this place seem to see no difference between illegal occupation and squatting, the only difference being that someone is paying the rent.

I find that staggering. I am sure that many people living in London and waiting for tenancies will find such complacency absolutely staggering. I hope that that will be made clear to everyone living in boroughs where there is housing stress, for it is little wonder that their local Labour councils find it difficult to cope with voids and illegal occupation when their elected representatives are so complacent.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) was not advocating anything. I hope that the Minister will read carefully in *Hansard* what he said because he will note that it is a complicated problem rather than a nice simple one—*[Interruption.]* I urge him to read the *Official Report*, though I accept that the Minister may need some advice to understand the position. Indeed, to understand it one must know something about the housing and legal problems involved.

Will the performance indicators that apply to local authorities also apply to the Government, who have 16 per cent. of their housing stock empty, which is far higher than even the worst local authority anywhere in the country?

Mr. Baldry: Hon. Members need not read *Hansard* to know what the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) said. He was clearly saying that it was perfectly all right to have illegal occupation, providing someone was paying the rent.

Mr. Fraser *rose*——

Mr. Baldry: That is a recipe for selling keys and for increasing the numbers in illegal occupation. We shall all be able to read his comments in the *Official Report*, and I hope that his words will be read widely abroad.

Mr. Fraser *rose*——

Mr. Baldry: I will not give way. It is no good the hon. Gentleman seeking now to justify what he said.

Mr. Fraser: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It will be within the recollection of the House that I asked the Minister to give a factual description, and I said that there was no case for complacency. I used words to the effect that there was no complacency over these matters. It is a courtesy of the House, if one hon. Member misrepresents what another hon. Member has said, to give an opportunity for the hon. Member concerned to counter the allegation, which in this case was wholly wrongly based in relation to what I said.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): That is not a point of order for the Chair. Hon. Members are aware of the arrangements that exist here. It is up to the hon. Member who has the Floor to decide whether to give way. Whether it is wise to do so is not for me to judge.

Mr. Baldry: All Members present and anyone who reads the *Official Report* will be able to judge what the hon. Gentleman said. He is a former Minister. I hope that as many people as possible in London will have an opportunity to read in full what he said.

Mr. Raynsford *rose*——

Mr. Baldry: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman shortly, after I have answered the question put by the hon. Member for Hammersmith about performance indicators, but we must make progress.

The Government will set themselves high standards in seeking to reduce voids in Government properties. We are determined to do that and I assure the hon. Gentleman that the targets that we shall be setting ourselves will be as tough as, if not tougher than, any target we set for local authorities.

The performance indicators are central to the improvement of housing management. Authorities are now required to reply annually to tenants on their

[Mr. Baldry]

performance on a wide range of housing management functions, such as their repairs and maintenance services, levels of rent arrears and empty properties. We are currently evaluating the first reports. Councils are now more accountable to their tenants as their customers, so tenants are able, for the first time, to judge the service being provided by their landlord, to compare it with others and to participate more fully.

One of our undoubted success stories has been the estate action programme, which aims to transform rundown local authority housing estates into places where people want to live. As well as physical improvements to estates, the measures that estate action promotes are intended to involve tenants in their management as well as providing them with choice in housing and opportunity for economic and social development and employment. The success of estate action is underpinned by the development of an effective partnership between the authority and tenants.

I am also glad to say that we now see the results of other Government initiatives to involve tenants, such as the success of the housing action trust programme. Two HATs have now been established in Hull and in Waltham Forest. The ballot of tenants in Liverpool will start on 20 July. With more than 5,000 tenants in Liverpool eligible to vote, it could be the largest HAT to date and could bring extensive improvements in housing in Liverpool. We are also discussing further HAT proposals with the local authorities in Birmingham, Brent and Tower Hamlets and it is hoped that the tenants in each of these areas will be given an early opportunity to vote for a HAT.

As a consequence of the citizens charter initiative, tenants have now been given the opportunity to propose HATs for their own estates and we hope that many will do so. By ensuring their participation in making crucial decisions, HATs will guarantee a sense of pride and ownership among tenants of some of the most rundown estates.

We have also been active in promoting the interests of housing association tenants. Under new powers in the Housing Act 1988, the Housing Corporation has issued "The Tenants' Guarantee". It sets out basic performance standards for housing associations and gives important rights and expectations to new housing association tenants. The Housing Corporation has also issued housing associations with detailed performance criteria and has introduced a regime of key performance indicators to assess how well associations are measuring up to the task.

The Housing Corporation's new "Strategy for Tenant Participation" sets out five objectives to encourage greater tenant involvement in the management of housing association stock. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington will be keen to know that the package includes revised performance expectations to encourage more housing associations to give greater say to their tenants, increasingly through delegated management, co-operation with the Housing Corporation to deliver our manifesto commitment to set up an independent ombudsman to handle tenants' complaints, targeted revenue grants to support major investment schemes with substantial tenant involvement, backed up by national investment targets for tenant-controlled developments, an emphasis on extending the range of participation options open to tenants and three-year regional tenant participation strategies which set out targets and resources required.

We are, of course, still committed to helping all the tenants who want to buy their own homes. The introduction of a statutory rents-to-mortgages scheme will offer a valuable new route into home ownership for tenants who are financially secure but cannot quite afford the full right-to-buy price.

Rents-to-mortgages has been successfully piloted in the new towns of Basildon and Milton Keynes. The evidence from those pilots is that some tenants who would not have been able to become owner-occupiers under the right to buy were able to afford to purchase on rents-to-mortgages terms. We intend to introduce legislation this autumn, as promised in our manifesto, so that this new low-risk route into owner-occupation is also open to local authority tenants.

We are also concerned to empower tenants in the private sector. To assist leaseholders who wish to take over the freehold of their block and have a greater say in its management, we have decided to give long leaseholders in residential flats the right to enfranchise. They will be able to purchase collectively the freehold of their block at market value or collectively agree to nominate a third party purchaser.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: No, because I have given way a lot.

It is our intention and commitment that a decent home should be within reach of every family. Our policies for social housing are designed to provide the improvements in standards and opportunities for tenants to control and influence their own housing. We are fast moving away from the old municipal paternalism whereby tenants were told what was best for them and we are moving fast towards arrangements that give people more choice and encourage fresh ideas and solutions to management problems. The measures we are taking encourage tenants to take control not just of their own lives but of the environment in which they live. In this way, we are reversing neglect and mismanagement and substituting sensitive local management directed at the needs of tenants rather than the needs of some distant landlord.

There is increasing awareness of the need to treat the customer and people with respect, to consult, to deliver effective service, to report on performance and to respond to the signals the customer sends. With this Government, people matter, tenants matter.

We are committed to securing a better deal for council tenants. We will introduce more choice, improve management of estates and create new rights as part of the tenants charter. Our aim will be to give tenants a choice of landlord wherever possible, and to make management of both council and housing association stock more responsive to the needs of tenants.

We will improve the way in which council housing is managed by bringing in new private sector providers operating on contract to the local authority. We will introduce more competition and choice, thereby improving services to the tenant and increasing accountability; and we intend to give council tenants new opportunities themselves to improve the flats or houses in which they

live. In short, we are determined to give tenants all possible rights and opportunities for participation in their own housing.

10.14 am

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I am sad to say that the Minister's speech was very depressing. It is the same old story. The Government propose a debate on

"Tenants' rights, opportunities and participation"

and it turns out to be a Minister's speech knocking local authorities. It is pathetic.

When the Minister talks about rights, does not he understand that he can go only a few hundred yards from the House and find homeless teenage children who have the "right" to live in a cardboard box? The reason is that the Government have taken away social security benefits from 16 to 18-year-olds unless they are on a recognised educational or Government-approved course. As many have family backgrounds that do not permit that, they are unable to go on such courses.

For the first time in the experience of people under 60 years old, we now see homeless British children begging on British streets. I was brought up to believe that that was a problem for developing countries. The problem is here now, but it need not have happened. I should have been far more impressed by the Minister if he had said that the new Tory Government would bring in a right to rent. Would not that have been an imaginative step forward? Even *The Daily Telegraph* would have been on the Government's side, because it suggested such a scheme last week.

The real issue is that the Government have got rid of 2 million homes from the rented sector since the 1979 election. Some 1 million homes went from the council sector and 1 million went from the private rented sector which has collapsed and is only just beginning to revive because of the price freeze in the housing market—which will not last long.

As the Government have got rid of 2 million homes from the rented market, it is not surprising that the Government-appointed Rural Development Commission says that rural homelessness is now a desperate problem. It says that there are youngsters who cannot leave home, although their parents are well housed, because there is nowhere affordable for them to rent or buy. Is it any surprise that there are people in boxes on the streets? Is it any surprise that there are families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation for up to three years? The Minister should try to bring up his own children in bed-and-breakfast, for heaven's sake. He should try to understand what the medical profession and the social work profession are saying to the Government about the need to provide affordable rented accommodation to improve the health, education and social skills performance of young people who are in temporary housing for many years.

The Minister should understand all those points. His speech was something of a black hole, because the content was smaller than the speech itself so that everything that went into it disappeared. What has the Minister said today? He has said, "I do not like council housing. I am not quite prepared to say what my predecessor said about bringing an end to council housing as soon as possible, but I am going as near to that as I can, as we might have to change policy because we are embarrassed by our policy on homelessness."

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): The hon. Gentleman has made some fair points, especially on the 16-year-olds—a subject to which I hope to return later in the debate if I catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. However, the hon. Gentleman also seeks to put all the blame on the Government for not providing houses. He will be aware that under this Government, there are 2 million more homes than there were before. He will also be aware that there are 83,000 empty council properties nationwide. Those 83,000 dwellings would overnight solve the problems that he and I seek to solve.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman forgets an important point. I urge him to read not only the Audit Commission report, but other reports on the matter. The average void stock for local authorities is 2·5 per cent., which is better than the figure for housing associations, significantly better than the figure for the private sector and massively better than the figure for the Government sector.

Two points follow from the Audit Commission report. First, some local authorities are far better than others and some have much bigger problems than others. Secondly, there is a need to have some flexibility in the system. If the rate drops much below 2·5 per cent. there is not much flexibility for the system to move.

The Minister spoke about naughty local authorities which cannot manage their stock. The issue is that housing associations, the private sector and the Government cannot manage their stock. The Government own 36,000 empty properties, not all of which are defence properties. Tomorrow morning, or even today, the Minister could stop selling those properties on the private market, because selling them reduces prices in the housing market and aggravates our economic policies. In Swindon 24 beautiful, Government-owned houses are being dumped on the open market and Swindon has people in bed-and-breakfast acccommodation. There are thousands of other examples all over Britain.

We should stop talking about good and bad local authorities and good and bad government and focus on housing management. The Government have fallen into the trap that they have accused us of falling into. They are worried about ownership. I am not. I am worried about good management, affordable rents and tenants' rights in the private and public sectors and in housing associations. Should a tenant of someone such as Van Hoogstratten or someone who has been convicted of harassment or who has a record of persistent bad management have the right to challenge that landlord? Of course he should.

When I intervened during the Minister's speech, he said that private tenants have rights. He should read the Age Concern document and one or two of the other publications sent out by those who are worried about tenants' rights. Age Concern says that 56 per cent. of private sector tenants are elderly, and such people often suffer most at the hands of private landlords. Most private landlords are good, but when they are bad they can be extremely bad. Under the 1988 Act the tenant has a right to take court action and have the landlord sent to prison. Isn't that great? A tenant who is lucky enough to overcome the problems of legal aid and take his landlord to court and who, with even more luck, gets a conviction will find himself in the attractive position of facing a landlord who has spent three months in prison. That person will not be the landlord's most popular tenant.

[Mr. Soley]

Tenants who suffer from persistent bad management or harassment in any housing sector should have the right to transfer the ownership of their homes to another sector. That could be done by due legal process. As I have said many times, we need a proper charter of rights for tenants. We must increase the supply of affordable rented accommodation and we need a body that will act as the tenants' policeman in all sectors. Before the general election I said that we should consider the possibility of a housing bank to perform the banking role presently carried out by the Housing Corporation. It would channel private money into the housing associations, possibly to local authorities and possibly even to private renting landlords as long as they are prepared to meet the requisite criteria.

The Housing Corporation could become the tenants' policeman and could step in to deal with persistently bad landlords in the private sector, the council sector or the Government sector. The corporation could take steps to transfer those properties and, through the normal process, it could compensate the private sector. That is a perfectly reasonable suggestion. Perhaps the corporation could take the 24 houses in Swindon and transfer them to Swindon council which, as I think the Minister will agree, is a good manager, or to a housing association. Families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation could be given those homes. That would improve tenants' rights. It would make hon. Members feel that we had achieved something for the real world outside.

The Minister should think radically in that way, instead of allowing himself to be trapped in the jargon of the past where he sees only the bad local authority, raises his horns and charges bellowing down the field. The Minister's argument is pathetic nonsense, because the majority of local authorities are good managers and that is borne out in reports by the Audit Commission and by other reports. When they are bad they can be very bad, but at least they are never as bad as the worst private landlords such as the Van Hoogstrattens of this world.

The 1988 Act, combined with housing shortage in the rented sector, means that it is only a matter of time before there are more Rachman-type cases. As house prices begin to rise, people who have let accommodation in order not to have to sell at the bottom of the market will want to evict their tenants. Hon. Members forget too quickly that Rachman was not really a bad landlord, although he was not a nice person to have as a landlord, but his prime interest in life was property development. He wanted to buy cheap with tenants in and sell dear with tenants out, and a house market with prices moving up at a time of housing shortage and tenants with restricted rights is a recipe for that sort of future development.

Mr. Baldry: My concern is to ensure that all local authorities have the standards of the best. It seems that a certain amount of policy is being made on the hoof. What should happen to the rights of private owners? As I understand the hon. Gentleman, he says that in certain circumstances private owners should have their rights of ownership taken away. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will clarify that, because if people are to have their property confiscated by the state we ought to know in what circumstances it will happen.

We certainly share the concern about empty private sector properties. That is why we are sensibly ensuring that the Housing Corporation can nominate a housing association in every region as a managing agent for any owner who wishes to let his property through a housing association. That is a responsible way to bring properties back into use and to generate an income for their owners. That is different from confiscation.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. By their nature, interventions are intended to be brief and that applies as much to Ministers as to Back Benchers.

Mr. Soley: For years I have been saying that housing associations and councils should be able to manage for the private rented sector. There is no dispute about that. The Government addressed the ownership issue in, I think, the 1987 Act and have therefore made a limited amount of movement. It is not a matter of compulsory purchase, although that can be done within laws that were supported by the Conservative party.

The right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), the Secretary of State for the citizens charter —if that is his title—was one of 13 or 14 housing Ministers for the Conservatives. The Government have had a success rate akin to a short-let tenancy of six months. The right hon. Gentleman was in the job for about a year and he built on his predecessor's idea of a register of landlords who could be struck off if they were performing badly. Unfortunately, both he and his predecessor abandoned that idea. That was sad and retrogressive. If normal court procedure allowed such landlords to be struck off, the more normal process of the compulsory purchase order by which the property is transferred or sold to a council or housing association could be followed. That could be done under existing law, which is fully supported by the Government. If the Minister does not agree he must tell us what he would say to a tenant whose front door has been nailed and who has the dogs brought round to him now and again.

Let us assume that the tenant is brave enough and well resourced enough to go to court, to get a conviction and to put the landlord in prison for nine months—it could be longer, but that is unlikely. Then, the landlord comes out of prison and the tenant is still his tenant. What does the Minister say to such people? What rights do they have? We should be talking about tenants' participation. The Minister will give nothing to such tenants and that is the failure of the Government's policy.

My criticism of the Government is that they have never had a housing policy. They have tried to push owner-occupation as though that is the answer to everything, while inflicting the highest interest rates on record, with resulting mortgage repossessions leading to people going into bed-and-breakfast accommodation from home ownership. These people are then rehoused by the council, or sometimes kept in bed and breakfast by the council because it does not have sufficient housing. And that is supposed to be right.

Mr. Bowis: It depends on the complaint that the private tenant has against the private landlord. The hon. Gentleman must know, as I know, because I have used the system, that a private tenant can go to the local authority and, through the environmental services department or whatever, can get an instruction to the landlord to have the repairs done to put the property back into habitable use.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman is right. He puts the Minister on course to understanding that there are state powers to intervene. I advise the hon. Gentleman to read the Age Concern document, which, among other things, examines this problem of private tenants who cannot get effective intervention by the council. Very often, it is because local authorities do not want to intervene. Most inner city local authorities are quite good about this. Kensington, for example, was good at trying to get Mr. Van Hoogstratten dealt with.

Interestingly, after the passage of the 1988 Act and in response to one person's difficulties, Kensington was not the only body trying to do something about the problem. I wrote to the Prime Minister, to the Home Secretary—on the ground that some police action was necessary—to the Secretary of State for the Environment and to the Lord Chancellor. The reply from all of them was, "I'm sorry but I can't do anything about it." The challenge to the Minister is what he is going to do about it.

Apart from a housing policy that delivers affordable housing and does not cut it back in the dramatic way that the Government have—as is amply exemplified by the Duke of Edinburgh's figure of 2 million properties lost from the rented sector—we should focus on a charter of rights. I agree that this will have to be marginally different for the three sectors—the housing association sector, the council sector and the private sector.

Let us also focus on what should be the key points underpinning our policy—good quality management, affordable rents and tenants' rights. Let us not worry about ownership; I do not care who owns the property. If we get that right, we can move on.

We need a charter of rights, but it must be a real charter rather than this pathetic, dressed-up affair that the Government have produced. It is vital that tenants in all sectors are able to form co-operatives. It has been alleged that the Government are dropping their proposals for a commonhold procedure for leaseholders. If they have not, that should be made clear because there is a rumour going round that they have. I accepted that this could not be done in the first year of the new Parliament and presumed that that was why such a measure was not in this year's Queen's Speech. The Government are at least introducing proposals for extending leases and that is right and proper. Do they intend to continue developing commonhold and will they legislate in the next three years?

Mr. Baldry: I shall try to be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker, so as not to incur your wrath this time. The hon. Gentleman has only to read our manifesto to see what we intend to do during the lifetime of this Parliament. I have every confidence that the Opposition will be helpful in ensuring that we take through all our manifesto commitments just as quickly as possible.

Mr. Soley: It is always one of my regrets in life that, being a Member of Parliament, I do not have much time to read fiction. I am pleased to hear what the Minister has said and I welcome it, because there was some anxiety.

Commonhold is a form of co-operative. Therefore, I suggest that we need a co-operative tenure—probably with a couple of basic models of tenure, just as there are in the private sector—that would allow not only co-operatives to develop in their own right but councils and private properties in the commonhold system to move into a co-operative. Co-operative housing is well used in a number of sectors and well developed. There are ownership and management co-operatives and we should be developing this trend.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The very worst landlord in my constituency among the housing associations is the Co-operative Development Society. It treats its tenants like dirt. It ignores arbitration findings. If that is the sort of system that the hon. Gentleman is arguing for, I want none of it.

Mr. Soley: I have already said that I am not worried about ownership. I am worried about management and that is why I talk about the need for a tenants' policeman. Whatever the problem, in whatever type of housing—co-op, private, housing association—someone should be able to step in and protect tenants. That is why I suggested taking away the funding role of the Housing Corporation and giving it to a housing bank, which would be much more sensible in terms of investment in housing. That would release the Housing Corporation, allowing it to develop into an effective housing policeman that could deal with such cases, regardless of ownership. The logic of that is so compelling and simple that I cannot believe that the Government will not say, "Okay, we haven't got a housing policy. We are concerned only with encouraging people to buy and slanging off councils, and we should be developing a housing policy and ensuring tenants' rights."

Most local authorities are good. I have often cited the case of York. York has limited resources, but there are other councils with even fewer resources, and they could not follow its example. What York does is brilliant. It tells tenants that they have a certain amount of money to spend on their houses and that it is up to them how the money is spent. One tenant wants one thing in his house while another wants something completely different in his. Tenants choose the changes and improvements that are made to their houses. However, the Minister did not mention this example of good practice, which is followed by many Labour local authorities.

One can pick on Labour local authorities with bad practice and on those with enormous problems such as Lambeth and Southwark and make them into scapegoats, but that will not solve any problems. If the Government pursue the policies that they have been pursuing for the past 13 years, we shall continue to have homeless kids begging in our streets, families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, reports from Government agencies such as the Rural Development Commission showing that there is desperate homelessness in rural areas, reports such as "Faith in the City" and "Faith in the Countryside" from the Church criticising Government housing policy and reports such as that from the Duke of Edinburgh pointing out the collapse of the rented sector and the need to reform housing finance.

I warn the Government that if they turn the remaining bits of council housing into ghetto housing, we shall have the problems associated with ghetto housing, including a high crime rate, particularly the brutal crime that we see in the United States. The more people are made hopeless as well as homeless, or are forced to group together in poor circumstances, the greater those social problems become. That is what the Government do not understand. Without a housing policy ensuring tenants' rights—let us start with a right to rent, so that we can get rid of the shame of

[Mr. Soley]

children begging in our streets—everything that the Government have said today will be hollow, empty rhetoric.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I call the next hon. Member to speak in the debate, I wish to make it clear that many Members are anxious to make a contribution. I think that it should be possible to accommodate them all, providing that those who take the Floor are not, to put it bluntly, long winded.

10.39 am

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): I have taken careful note of what you have just said, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It was entirely reasonable for my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), the Minister for Housing and Planning, to give my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the opportunity to open the debate. He made a most encouraging speech and I look forward to the development of the policy that he has enunciated.

It is a great personal pleasure that my hon. Friend the Member for Acton has been reappointed Minister for Housing and Planning. We were in the Department of the Environment together and he was a first-class Under-Secretary of State with responsibilities for housing. I do not believe that there is anyone who is better qualified in terms of experience and ability to discharge the housing portfolio. I very much welcome my hon. Friend's reappointment.

I shall comment on three aspects of tenants' rights and opportunities. First, there is the Government's welcome development of the original right-to-buy scheme and its extension into the rent-to-mortgage scheme. The right-to-buy scheme is acknowledged, certainly by Conservative Members, to be one of the most important and beneficial social changes that any Government have ever put on the statute book. It has brought about an extension of opportunity to private individuals in a way that could not otherwise have been achieved. The benefits of the scheme have been derived throughout the country. It is significant that within the lifetime of the Government the implacable opposition of the Labour party to the right-to-buy concept has been turned by means of a screeching U-turn into support for the policy, and that we welcome.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir John Stanley: The hon. Gentleman has already made several interventions. I shall give way to him only once. I am mindful of Madam Deputy Speaker's words.

Mr. Raynsford: The hon. Gentleman referred to a U-turn. Does he recall that when he was a Minister and was encouraging local authorities to pursue the right-to-buy scheme he did so by saying that they would be able to use their capital receipts for reinvestment? Will he comment on the restrictions that now prevent authorities from using the receipts to provide desperately needed new homes?

Sir John Stanley: As the hon. Gentleman knows, local authorities are able to use a proportion of their capital receipts. When I was a Minister, the proportion was 100 per cent. for land receipts and 50 per cent. for housing sales receipts. As the hon. Gentleman and the rest of the House will know, there is no geographical relationship between where the receipts arise and where there are housing needs. A balance has to be struck between the proportion of the receipts that are placed in the centrally distributed national totals and the proportion retained by local authorities. It is reasonable that in the housing investment allocations the local authorities with the greatest needs receive the greatest share of the moneys that are available.

In his opening remarks my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State forshadowed the valuable rent-to-mortgages scheme in terms of housing legislation that will be presented in the autumn. We look forward to that. I do not know whether he is able today to give us more details. At the moment we have simply a name of a scheme. As far as I am aware, none of the key or essential parameters has been announced. It would be interesting to know, for example, whether there is to be a period during which tenants have to qualify before they can fall within the scheme. It would be interesting to know also what proportion of rent will be commuted into mortgage. Equally, it would be interesting to know at what point tenants will have to assume a degree of financial responsibility for repairs. That, of course, is part of the move towards owner-occupation. These are essential financial parameters and if my hon. Friend were able to give us more details today, it would be of great interest.

A specific matter which I wish to pursue with my hon. Friend the Minister, because I have a constituency interest, is the question of which tenants are to be eligible. The Conservative party manifesto stated that the scheme would extend to council tenants. I wish to know whether housing association tenants will be able to benefit from the scheme. In my view, it would be highly desirable in principle that they should be able to do so. There may be some complications arising from charity law for charitable housing associations, but I do not believe that there will be basic difficulties for housing association tenants who are living in non-charitable housing association property.

There is a group of housing association tenants which I believe has the most important claim to being a beneficiary of the scheme. I refer to the tenants of housing associations that have been formed at the request of the Government and, indeed, with the Government's strong encouragement. They have taken receipt of what was formally local authority housing stock, which has been transferred en bloc to housing associations. I believe that about 20 local authorities have taken that route—they have been urged on by the Government—including the local authority within my constituency of Tonbridge and Malling. These former local authority tenants have become housing association tenants within a relatively short time. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister agrees that it would be wrong and indefensible that local authorities that have responded to the Government's wish that they should transfer stock en bloc to housing associations should see their previous tenants denied access to the rent-to-mortgages scheme.

In answer to a question that I tabled, my hon. Friend the Member for Acton said that the Government were consulting on the extension. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has anything

further to say about that which is positive. I wish to make it clear to him that I—I believe that this will be mirrored by other hon. Members, perhaps on both sides of the House, who have tenants in the position which I have described—attach the greatest importance to ensuring that former local authority tenants who are now housing association tenants are able to benefit from the rents-to-mortgages scheme.

Secondly, I refer to the tenants charter. My hon. Friend the Minister was historically entirely correct in what he said about it in his opening remarks. It is right that the Government, a Conservative Administration, have put the tenants charter legislation on the statute book.

Mr. Raynsford: They inherited it.

Sir John Stanley: The Labour Government had successive years in office and they could have put the necessary legislation on the statute book. For years and years there was intense debate within the Labour party. The paternalism of the Labour party at local authority level and nationally caused delay after delay. The Labour party has only itself to blame for the fact that by the time that the Labour Administration lost office in 1979 the necessary legislation was not on the statute book. The Conservative party took things forward, as it was committed to do by its manifesto, and the Conservative Administration put the legislation on the statute book by means of the Housing Act 1980.

I am delighted that since then we have further developed the tenants charter. The charter can in many ways be said to be the forerunner of our subsequent charter initiatives. We have introduced the citizens charter, the patients charter and the parents charter, for example. These initiatives demonstrate the key importance that we attach to ensuring the rights of individuals when dealing with large public sector bodies.

I welcome the 1992 edition of the tenants charter booklet. I congratulate my Front-Bench colleagues and officials in the Department of the Environment on the excellent presentation that is to be found in the new council tenants booklet. It is a model of clarity. There is an imaginative use of colour coding. The areas in which there are existing statutory rights are shown in red. In blue there are rights that are subject not to statute but to good practice. In green there are the rights that are to be made available. It is an excellent document and I hope that it will be in the hands of millions of tenants throughout the country.

Two matters arise from the booklet and I ask my hon. Friend the Minister whether he can give me some more information. As I understand it, the Government envisage that the council tenants charter document of the Department of the Environment will be supplemented by each local authority producing its own local authority tenants charter, which will be based on updated or new legislation. That is an excellent initiative. Can my hon. Friend the Minister say how much progress has been made by housing authorities throughout the country in producing their own versions of the tenants charter booklet, setting out their own practices in relation to the statutory legislation?

My hon. Friend the Minister said, in respect of the green sections in the council tenants charter booklet, that the Government will introduce this autumn welcome legislation to enhance the right to repair and to improve. However, he did not mention an aspect to which I attach great importance. I refer to the Government's commitment to introduce a new form of court to deal with housing cases that will not require the services of a lawyer.

That excellent initiative addresses the difficulty, for cost reasons, of tenants being able to maintain and to uphold their legal rights. I am delighted that in housing at least the Government are looking for a clear way forward, to give individuals a more effective means of standing on their legal rights against local authorities. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies, he will give an assurance that that commitment to establishing a means of allowing an individual tenant to take a local authority to court without using a lawyer will be enshrined in this autumn's legislation.

In 1979—for the first time since 1945—the Government produced a comprehensive and determined approach to difficult-to-let and rundown estates. I remember as a Minister how sobering it was to receive submissions from officials requiring ministerial authorisation to blow up council blocks that had become impossible to let and dangerous in security terms. One of the blocks was only 10 years old, which shows the downward spiral that can be created if there is no management control.

The priority estates programme launched by that first Conservative Government has mushroomed and has attracted substantial public expenditure and development into the action estates schemes and housing action trusts. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies, he will be able assure us that dealing with difficult-to-let priority estates will be a central issue during the lifetime of this Parliament. It is all very well for right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House to debate tenants' rights and opportunities, but in such estates that is empty talk. Many tenants seek only the right to get out of those estates and to transfer elsewhere.

Our excellent collection of manifesto proposals presented further radical and progressive housing measures that are properly balanced between tenants who aspire to home ownership and those who want to continue to rent. I wish the Government every success—not least in their negotiations with the Treasury—in implementing quickly and effectively the policies which they presented to the electorate and which the electorate endorsed.

10.53 am

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I am grateful for this opportunity to speak on an extremely important issue—my first opportunity to do so since my re-election to the House. This is not my maiden speech, because I delivered that in 1986—when I also addressed the subject of housing. On that occasion, I reviewed the current situation and expressed alarm and concern at the extent of unmet housing needs. Sadly, the position has deteriorated since then.

We have seen a further tragic increase in the number of homeless people. The official total is now 150,000 households a year in England—three times the level when the present Government took office in 1979. That is only the tip of the iceberg, because the records do not include large numbers of single people who do not qualify under the priority group categories, and those who are turned away because they are deemed intentionally homeless. They include many who lost their homes because of mortgage default, who are judged to have brought

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misfortune upon themselves—though, heaven knows, the Government's interest rates policy is the prime cause of the misery suffered by so many of those people.

Housing stock condition is also a terrible problem not just in local authorities, but in the private and housing association sectors. It is a problem compounded by inadequate investment and improvement grant policy that, although it seeks to target assistance at areas of greatest need, has brought improvement activity to a complete halt in many areas. Many of us want an urgent Government review of the present restrictions on improving older homes.

One must consider also the Government's tragic record of decline in new home construction in both the public and private sectors. As a consequence of the recession, the private sector construction industry is still in real difficulty, and the same is true in respect of the public sector. The Government's continued vendetta against council housing has reduced the number of new council homes built from an average 100,000 a year in the 1970s to virtually nil today. People are left with no prospect of obtaining a new home—and little or no prospect of having improvements made to their existing properties.

The Government talk about one aspect of housing policy, where their ambitions may be laudable. Few of us dispute the case for extending tenants' rights, though many would like to see a more even-handed approach, with an extension of rights to all tenures. The Minister gave a most evasive reply to the question that I put in my intervention. I remind him that leaseholders are not the same as tenants, and that the extension of leaseholders' rights does nothing for many private sector tenants who suffer inadequate service from their landlords.

We accept the case for the further development of tenants' rights, but that will become a reality only if there is an adequate supply of housing, the prospect of the inadequately accommodated obtaining better housing, and the exercise of some choice. Sadly, that is not the case today.

The Government ignore the gaping hole in their own policy that was so decisively exposed by the Audit Commission's recent report, which should be compulsory reading for all Conservative Members and ought to receive the Minister's urgent attention. Does the Minister propose to respond to the commission's critique, which makes it clear that there cannot be an effective housing policy without a Government assessment of the extent of housing need? Why have not the Government published estimates? Why are they so coy about the Audit Commission's evidence that, even on the most optimistic forecasts of housing association output, there will be a shortfall of 14,000 homes a year?

Because an insufficient number of affordable new homes is becoming available, more and more people will be left in inadequate accommodation. Why was there no reference in the Minister's speech to the Audit Commission's work, which exposed the gaping hole at the centre of Government policy? Without action, talk about rights will be pure rhetoric and will have no foundation.

How can someone who has no prospect of being transferred from an old, cold, and miserable home, because the local authority cannot provide sufficient new accommodation or modernise its unsatisfactory stock, feel that he or she has rights?

Meanwhile, we are faced with a nonsensical position whereby a local authority's large capital receipts could be used, if only the Government would abandon their blinkered and foolish restriction allowing authorities to use only 25 per cent. of receipts from council house sales for reinvestment. In my local authority area, the London borough of Greenwich, over £20 million is currently available. Many council estates are desperately in need of new windows, for example.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. No doubt you will have heard reports that devastating cuts are to hit London hospitals —cuts which will threaten patient services and also the future of medical research and education. We fear that worse is to come, not only for London but for hospitals and health services throughout the country. Can you tell us, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether the Secretary of State for Health—who is imposing the cuts—will come to the House today to answer for the consequences?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Let me make it clear that the Chair has no responsibility for whether a Secretary of State, or any other Minister, comes to the House to make statements. I should add that no request for a statement has been received.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: There is no further point to be made.

Mr. Smith: On a related but different point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Throughout the morning, it has been reported in the media—on the radio, for example —that plans are afoot for Government cuts affecting London hospitals. There is a good deal of concern among my constituents, some of whom are patients at Bart's and University College hospitals. We must have some information from the Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, but that point relates to one with which I have already dealt. There is no point for the Chair to consider; besides, we are already debating a matter that is very dear to the hearts of those present.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I hope that it is more relevant than the first point of order that the hon. Gentleman made this morning.

Mr. Skinner: You have been here long enough to know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is difficult to get Ministers to make statements about anything on Fridays. This is only a part-time Government and many of them have left. We all understand that, and the same has applied to other Governments of different political descriptions——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman come to the point please?

Mr. Skinner: The point that I am coming to is this. No health Minister is available at present. As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, there have been occasions—rare

though they may have been—on which Ministers have come here at 2.30 pm. It is a scandal that two hospitals close to this building, St. Thomas's and the Westminster hospital, are being denuded of staff. What would happen if someone in this building took ill? I am not talking about Members of Parliament; I am talking about the 2,000-odd real workers who are employed here. You have a duty, Madam Deputy Speaker—as Madam Speaker's representative—to take some action.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have already explained the position very clearly. The hon. Gentleman has been here as long as I have and he knows that that is not a point of order for the Chair. The point has been made and we must now resume the main debate.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): On a related point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) has rightly spoken of London's housing crisis. Many of the people whom he has described depend on good hospital services and the alarming news of cuts at the Whittington hospital will greatly concern my constituents. It really does demand a statement from the Secretary of State for Health.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must understand that the Chair is responsible only for certain matters and that the point that has been raised is not the Chair's responsibility.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Cox: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. You have been in the House for many years and you know that the duty of the occupant of the Chair is to protect the interests of Back Benchers. A number of hon. Members have commented on a certain issue and two and a half hours of parliamentary time are still available. If you, Madam Deputy Speaker, sadly do not have the authority to take up the points that have been made, I hope that the Government Whip who is present will do his duty and make hon. Members' concern known to the appropriate Minister. That concern should be felt by hon. Members on both sides of the House, because all of them may be affected.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have already dealt in some detail with the points that have been raised, and Conservative Front Benchers have doubtless heard what has been said. I cannot take the matter any further this morning and I must protect the rights of those who wish to speak in the debate.

Mr. Raynsford: Let me tell my hon. Friends who have rightly raised the issue of threats to London hospitals that many of the people whom I have described—people living in old, cold properties without adequate heating—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not expect Front Benchers to set such a bad example.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was simply responding to the Government Whip—who, as you know, by tradition should remain mute.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is not always wise to give in to temptation.

Mr. Raynsford: Many people suffering cold and miserable conditions may well face a "double whammy" from the Government: they may not only have no decent home in which to live, but find that there is no hospital for them to go to if poor housing conditions affect their health.

There are other problems, however. People cannot hope to exercise any rights if they have no homes to go to because of the inadequate supply of rented accommodation. Many of my constituents live in properties that are old and in poor condition and they want them to be modernised. Housing associations are keen to introduce a rehabilitation programme, but cannot do so because the current total cost indicator—TCI—rules and the grant regime make it impossible for them to provide affordable homes.

As the Minister probably knows very well, the rehabilitation programme has been halted in many inner-city areas as a result. He may shake his head, but he is wrong. He should be receiving evidence that many of the best housing associations in the country are now saying that they cannot do their job, because the Government's current financial regime has made it impossible for them to provide decent homes at affordable rents.

The problem of affordability is also denying many tenants the opportunity to move. They cannot afford the rents that they would have to pay under the Government's new subsidy arrangements. Many others will feel deeply cynical about a Government who, while claiming to be interested in tenants' rights, force those tenants to pay part of the cost of their neighbours' housing benefit. The current subsidy regime forces up some tenants' rents in order to subsidise others. That cannot be fair. What if such logic were applied in the owner-occupied sector? There would be an outcry if well-off home owners were asked to contribute a levy on their mortgage payments to meet the costs of income support for poorer home owners.

All those measures are making a mockery of a programme that talks of extending rights and choice. Rights, choice and tenant participation cannot be extended while current Government policies continue, causing inadequate housing provision and—through the subsidy regime—forcing rents beyond a reasonable level.

Although Opposition Members welcome the principle of extending tenants' rights, we must express the gravest cynicism about the Government's actual policies. Like many tenants, we know that, in the previous Parliament, this same Government introduced a grotesquely ill-titled scheme called "tenants' choice", which was supposedly about extending tenants' choice, but which, in practice, was about extending opportunities for landlords to take over certain council housing estates. The Government know only too well how tenants throughout the country reacted to that policy: they said that it was a sham and a fraud. They knew that anyone who came up with a scheme under which any tenant who did not vote would be assumed to be in favour of opting for another landlord was up to no good. It is hardly surprising that tenants have voted decisively with their feet against having anything to do with that discredited scheme.

The Government's intentions are, sad to say, revealed in their previous record. They are not about the interests of tenants and the extension of their rights; they have an ideological programme, based on a deep hostility to

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council housing. Until the Government recognise the misguided nature of their policy, start to think seriously about housing needs and pay heed to the words of organisations such as the Audit Commission, which has showed up the inadequacy of the Government's policies, we cannot expect there to be a real extension of tenants' rights and real opportunities for participation.

11.10 am

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to address the House for the first time. It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford). I have read many of his articles, always with pleasure. However, having reached the end of an article, I have often, regretfully, had to disagree with him.

I pay tribute to my predecessor, Sir Robert McCrindle, who served with great distinction the people of Brentwood and Ongar, and its predecessor constituencies, in the House. He was rightly regarded by his constituents with great affection. He spoke with great authority in many debates, particularly those on financial services and aviation. His first speech was typically a battle on behalf of his constituents with regard to compulsory purchase. His last speech was, again typically, a battle on behalf of Brentwood and Ongar. He told the Government in no uncertain terms that the people of Brentwood and Ongar do not want the M12, which is blighting my constituency. As you may know, Madam Deputy Speaker, Sir Robert did not enjoy the best of health during his last few years as a Member of Parliament. Therefore, I am sure that the whole House will be pleased to know that Sir Robert is now in very good health. I am confident that both he and his wife Myra will enjoy many happy and healthy years of retirement from politics.

Brentwood and Ongar is situated about 20 miles to the north-east of this House, in the county of Essex. Since my adoption of Essex, it has become clear to me that the people of the country are divided into two—those who come from Essex and those who wish they came from Essex. For a Yorkshireman to say that is true praise indeed.

My constituency straddles the two main conurbations of Abridge and West Horndon. It has played a curious and significant part in the nation's history. According to Robert Graves, it was the scene where a singular battle over sovereignty was fought—not over the treaty of Rome but over the treaty of the Roman legions. It was the place where the Emperor Claudius met the ancient Britons. The residents of Brentwood and Ongar were the first to see elephants on these shores. Our association with elephants continued for 2,000 years. The East India Company decided to set up its training school for elephants in Brentwood. It was there that the first, second or even third sons of the landed gentry met those huge quadrupeds for the first time. Stories still abound among my constituents about these bewildered members of the aristocracy losing themselves in Brentwood and Ongar.

The site of that elephant training school is now the headquarters of Ford UK and Ford Europe. Many international and national companies are to be found in my constituency. Rhone Poulenc, a French pharmaceutical company, has based its research facility in Brentwood and Ongar. It is also the headquarters of Amstrad, the computer company which has done so much to ensure that ordinary people have the opportunity to own personal computers. While retaining its traditions, therefore, Brentwood and Ongar is a constituency which looks to the future. I am proud to represent it here.

About 80 per cent. of Brentwood and Ongar's housing stock is now in owner-occupation. The two district councils are the largest providers of rented housing for the remaining 20 per cent. In Brentwood there has been a decline of about 3 per cent. a year in the public rented sector, largely as a result of right-to-buy. There have been more than 2,000 sales since the scheme began. That is a remarkable achievement.

Public housing was largely responsible for the forming of my own political views, contrary to the political tradition of my family. I was brought up on a council estate in the West Riding of Yorkshire where my parents ran a small corner shop. As I looked at the style and condition of the houses occupied by my friends and neighbours, my conviction grew that they deserved a better landlord. I served for many years on a local authority and do not want to paint all local authorities black, but, even when they are at their most benign, they do not make good landlords. They are cumbersome and bureaucratic. Pavements remain cracked for want of inspection; window frames remain unpainted for want of a form. Brave is a tenant who decides to take matters into his own hands. To me, there is no such thing as a golden age of public housing.

Any reasonable housing policy must be based on quality, diversity and choice. Above all, it must be based on what people want. People simply want to own their own homes. According to the Council of Mortgage Lenders and a recent BBC survey, 77 per cent. of the population believe that to own their own homes is the ideal tenure. I have heard hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber argue that the British obsession with wanting to own one's home is wrong. That message is particularly hard to swallow when it is given by people who come from families who are second, third or even fourth generation owner-occupiers. Perhaps my socialist ancestors would approve of what I think about those sentiments: what is good enough for the toffs is good enough for the workers. People have the right to own their own homes. We have an obligation to ensure that they can do so.

I welcome the Minister's reference to the rents-to-mortgages scheme. I understand and fully appreciate that it will not have the same impact as right-to-buy, but it will enable people, just one or two steps down the housing ladder, to own their own homes. I expect more people thereby to achieve their goal of home ownership. Nevertheless, I recognise that, for reasons of mobility and disposable income, some people may not want to buy. To offer diversity and choice represents a great challenge to both the Government and local government. It is a reflection of the greater challenge that faces the Government, which is to ensure that choice, freedom and opportunity are taken further down the social and economic ladder.

I am especially pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the concept of empowerment, which is the key to tenants' rights. We need to ensure that there are methods other than purchase by which tenants can exercise choice and enjoy freedom.

The more tenants are involved in the running of estates, the better those estates will be. And the more officials are removed from their air-conditioned towers and work and manage from estates, the better the estates will be. When I talk to housing officials, I sometimes feel that they regard estates as distant colonies—that there is a new form of colonialism, with the inspector going round once a month. If people have to drive past graffiti, cracked paving stones and holes in the road, those problems suddenly assume the importance that they should and suddenly the council gets round to doing something about them. I believe that the area management of estates is vital—just as important as the tenants charter.

I welcome the promise that, in the autumn, the right to repair will be improved, because at present the provisions are a little cumbersome and difficult to understand. Will my hon. Friend the Minister give his attention to, and perhaps also give us some further details on, the right of improvement? If people are to have the opportunity to use their own homes as their own homes, we must ensure that, when they decide to leave them, they are financially compensated for the improvements that they have made. If anything, the present right of improvement poses more difficulties than the right of repair and I should welcome a commitment to improve that right in the legislation.

I believe that council housing is now moving into a different age. Too much energy has been wasted on trying to find ways round regulations, on trying to prevent tenants from buying their own homes and on trying to stop housing action trusts coming into being. If just a quarter of that effort and vitality had been put into ensuring that tenants had a better deal and more opportunity to decide the way in which their homes, environment and estates were managed, the stock of public housing would be materially better than it is today.

11.22 am

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) on his maiden speech. He spoke fluently and with passion. It may seem a little strange that a former resident of Yorkshire should represent an Essex constituency, but, on the Liberal Democrat Benches, we have a Lancastrian representing the city of Bath. I look forward to hearing the hon. Gentleman's contributions in future.

I also congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your new role. This is the first time that you have been in the Chair when I have spoken in the House and it is thus my first opportunity to congratulate you. I also offer you the best wishes of my predecessor, Sir Charles Irving. As I know that your appointment brought him great pleasure.

I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in the debate. I do so in my capacity as housing spokesman for my party and as a local councillor with some experience of the problems.

People who rent, and the problems of people who rent, often fail to receive publicity, yet millions of families live in unfit accomodation or are on long waiting lists. Many of them suffer from health problems and stress as a result, and many were severely punished when the poll tax was introduced without any reduction in rent. It is on their behalf that I intend to speak this morning.

There are a number of ways of being a tenant and I believe that tenants should have basic rights irrespective of the form of tenure that they take. The Liberal Democrats would support any scheme that improved and enhanced the rights of tenants in both the public and the private sector.

One of the best ways to guarantee better standards of repair and protection from harassment is to give local authorities suitable powers. Even the Association of District Councils, which used to oppose the concept of additional duties, now supports the idea of placing a duty on local authorities to inspect houses in multiple occupation. Outside the family, the employer and landlord have the greatest influence on individual well-being. Employers are bound by restrictions, and landlords, too, should conform to a code of behaviour.

I hope that the Government will give the tenants charter real teeth. The charter should give tenants the right to have essential repairs carried out within a certain time limit. It should enhance the powers of the courts to award damages to tenants in cases of harrassment or illegal eviction and it should improve access to legal aid. The right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) referred to that question and I have received a number of representations from solicitors in my constituency, who are concerned that the legal aid system is underfunded and that poorer people are thus being denied the right to suitable legal representation. Finally, the tenants charter should require local authorities to ensure that housing, public health and fire requlations are observed in private rented housing.

In discussing rights, we must include those who live on state benefits alone. They are citizens of this country, too. Although the absence of cheap rented accommodation is the principal reason for homelessness, the barriers preventing the homeless from obtaining accommodation have increased remarkably in the past three years.

It is essential to improve the delivery of housing benefit and I agree with what the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) said about the system of funding that benefit. In my own constituency of Cheltenham, the local council will pay about £6 million in benefits this year and only £1·9 million is to be provided by the Government. That means that rents will increase more than they should.

It is vital that the emergency interim payments of housing benefit, which are supposed to be available within 14 days, are delivered on time. We must also have much closer inspection by central Government to ensure that local authorities are performing properly. At the moment, neither the Department of Social Security nor the Department of the Environment inspects their operations. Housing benefit changes in 1988 made one third of all homes in multiple occupation users worse off.

Students represent a growing proportion of the residents of privately rented housing, especially in Cheltenham, where the Cheltenham and Gloucester college of higher education expects to increase its student population from 5,500 to 8,500 in the next few years and where we may shortly have our own university. That puts enormous pressure on rented accommodation. In 1990, the Government decided to remove from students all entitlement to housing benefit—and this at a time when student grants have been frozen. I strongly believe that that policy should be reversed and that those who opt to stay in education should at least be able to do so without incurring huge debts.

Safety, too, is important. A report issued by the National Consumer Council last September showed clearly why tenants should be given basic rights. It

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predicted that if action is not taken, over the next 10 years we must expect more than 1,500 people to die and 25,000 to be injured in England and Wales as a result of fires in houses of multiple occupancy. Yesterday, I talked to the chief fire officer of Gloucestershire, Mr. Malcolm Eastwood, who told me that he is very worried at the state of some HMOs in Cheltenham and in Gloucester, which he regards as tinder boxes.

The first opportunity that tenants must have is to be a tenant in the first place—and at an affordable rent. We have heard this morning of the gap between the amount of social housing or rented accommodation that is available and the number of people who need that rented accommodation. The rented sector has an important role to play in meeting the needs of certain people, often those who do not wish or are unable to buy. One in three families in Britain cannot afford to buy their own home.

The lack of rented accommodation forces many people into owner-occupation that they cannot afford. We have all had cases of people who bought their council house at the top of the market, lost their job, had their home repossessed and went back on the local council's books. I had one particularly distressing case of a family who were in bed-and-breakfast accommodation for 56 weeks because they took up the chance to buy their home and it all went wrong.

The stock of available rented accommodation has shrunk during the past 70 years. That trend must be reversed. An increase in supply would widen choice for potential tenants, increase competition and put pressure on landlords to reduce rents. The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar mentioned participation, which is vital if the mistakes of the past are to be avoided. The form of participation selected by tenants should include several basic principles.

First, tenants should be closely involved from the start with any decisions affecting their homes. Secondly, tenants should have a full range of housing options from which to choose. They should be able to control the management and maintenance of their homes, either directly through a management co-operative or estate management board, or by using an external agency such as the local authority or a housing association. In Cheltenham the residents of the St. Paul's area have voted to set up an estate management board in an attempt to tackle their problems. That move is strongly supported by the local Liberal Democrat councillors who represent the area.

There must be long-term investment in the rented sector. The hon. Member for Greenwich mentioned the capital assets that have been raised from the sale of council houses. In his reply, will the Minister tell us what are his intentions for those capital assets? In Cheltenham we have £11 million locked away in a bank account which we would like to use to help to solve the problems of homelessness in the area. Councils should be allowed to use the £6·5 billion raised from council house sales to initiate housing schemes to benefit the less well off.

There is evidence that housing benefit claimants are penalised in their search for rented accommodation. Income support should be paid to claimants in advance. The duty of local authorities to provide housing should be extended to 16 to 18-year-olds. Surely 16 to 18-year-olds should have the right to be housed when they have the legal ability to get married and have children.

The current financial and legal framework does not meet the needs of either landlords or tenants. The rent-a-room scheme detailed in the Conservative manifesto is welcome so far as it goes, but ultimately the supply of rented accommodation must be increased. I hope that the Government will take on board some of the ideas that I have outlined.

11.32 am

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): It is a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles). Not only did he pay a gracious tribute to his predecessor, who was a great friend of all Conservative Members, but he clearly marked out for himself a role, along the lines of the elephants, of trumpeting the cause of his constituency. We hope that his record in Bradford of trampling socialism under foot will continue. That is what our housing record is all about.

I begin by tackling a point raised by the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones). There is a great myth about housing capital receipts and it is an easy bandwagon for people to jump on. Those receipts are not sitting under someone's bed. They are either lent on the market or used as an alternative to external borrowing. If all the receipts were spent at once, the inevitable consequence would be pressure on interest rates to rise. The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) made some comments on the effect of interest rates on housing. I find it extraordinary that, at the same time, he should support a policy that would push up interest rates still further.

It is almost nine years since I delivered my maiden speech on housing. We were then extending the right to buy through the Housing and Building Control Act 1984. I have followed closely our Government's record on tenancy matters, which is second to none. The right to buy, the right to repair and some of the proposals contained in our manifesto are excellent ways of enfranchising tenants who, in the past, were so often treated like feudal serfs, usually by socialist, although not always socialist, authorities.

However, there remain those who are disenfranchised. For example, the tenants of charitable housing associations are denied the right to buy. They were denied it in another place by people who in many cases owned not just one but two, three or four houses. Those people denied to ordinary working-class people who were tenants of charitable housing associations the privilege which they themselves enjoyed as owner-occupiers.

We have had a chance to reverse the disenfranchisement of tenants and to extend the right to buy. The extension of the right to buy to tenants of charitable housing associations is not on the agenda at present, but I hope that the Government will return to it in due course. However, we could make it clear to the Housing Corporation that no further grants will be given to charitable housing associations until they are prepared to extend the opportunity to buy to their tenants where public money has financed the building of the estate. For example, the Sutton housing association estate in my constituency was funded 98 per cent. by the taxpayer. Only

2 per cent. of the money came from the charity to pay for landscaping. How can such a body deny its tenants the opportunity that we have given to local authority tenants?

I also wish to deal with the tenants of housing associations—not only charitable but non-profit-making. At their best, housing associations perform extremely well. I welcome some of their initiatives in both specialist housing and providing greater mobility. However, it is a sad fact that some housing associations do not measure up to that standard. I have had battle after battle with the Metropolitan Housing Trust, which has an estate in my constituency, the pedigree of which goes back to the socialist local authorities of north London. I referred earlier to the abominable record of the Co-operative Development Society, which has several houses in my constituency.

I welcome what my hon. Friend the Minister said about performance indicators and the adoption of a new, robust line by the Housing Corporation. But we must all judge that entirely on the basis of the performance of the Housing Corporation. The subject will not simply go away if tenants of housing associations continue to receive bad service for repairs in particular and have to take their landlords to court, as has happened in my constituency on several occasions. It is remarkable that the Housing Corporation did not step in straight away in those cases.

The issue of tenants' rights and responsibilities is extremely broad and it would be impossible to touch on every aspect. I wish to put into the debate some points that have not been addressed so far. On waiting lists, the Government's figures and those of the building societies reveal clearly that the aspiration of the huge majority of our people is to become a home owner. Among the youngest age group, the figure is between 80 and 90 per cent. So how is it that when they need housing and go along to their local authority, the only thing that they can do is put their name down on the list to rent? The only exception is in Wandsworth, but I do not know whether that scheme is still running.

People should be asked their preference when they seek housing. Local authorities should be obliged to keep a list of people who want to buy or share in ownership, as well as those who want to rent. That would provide some useful statistics to determine planning authorities' policies. It would also mean a guaranteed list of people who could be approached over joint participation schemes, which have been so successful, and would offer an opportunity for those involved in speculative building in the private sector to tailor their building to suit those wanting to buy in an area.

Alternative waiting lists are important and we shall also have to bite the bullet and decide whether waiting lists should be means tested. Some people who could well afford to buy put their names on the waiting list. I remember receiving a letter from two constituents who said that they could afford to buy a house costing £50,000, but wanted to go on the local authority waiting list because they did not see why they should spend their money. That is fair enough from their point of view, but, from the point of view of the community, I would rather that the money was used to help people in need.

The points system used by most local authorities causes people to worsen their housing conditions because they know that they will receive extra points only if they live in overcrowded conditions, if the property is in a poor state or if they have children before they want to. That is a crazy system and has been criticised by the university of Bristol, which has done a lot of research. It is time that public sector allocations encouraged families who do not have the opportunity to buy because of low incomes, rather than giving all tenancies to people who have not planned their lives as effectively.

Many hon. Members are worried that the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, places an unfair burden on local authorities such as Hillingdon, which contains London airport. I have always been amazed that whenever I suggested an overhaul of the 1977 Act, the local authority associations said that it was working satisfactorily, although all the evidence points the other way. During this Parliament I hope that we shall have a comprehensive review and I promise my hon. Friend the Minister that if I am a Member of the Select Committee on the Environment again it will be one of the matters to which we shall want to pay particular attention to.

Finally, as it is unfair to take up too much time when so many hon. Members want to speak, I stress that the Government have a proud record on this issue and have done more than any other Government to enfranchise tenants. They were responsible for much of the switch by traditional working-class Labour supporters to the Conservatives in 1983, 1987 and at the last general election, and long may we continue to work in their interests.

11.43 am

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): Although I agreed with some of the remarks of the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), I did not agree with his views on the way in which the Government have tried to enfranchise tenants. I am sure that, from his point of view, the right to buy had some purely political merit, but he and the Minister, who opened the debate with a singularly partisan speech, were extremely unfair to Labour local authorities, especially as we all regret the paternalistic attitude of local authorities of any party.

There is no doubt that if the 50,000 or 60,000 people in the Principality of Wales who are waiting for council houses or the 20,000 homeless people in Wales were given a choice between a paternalistic landlord or no house, they would choose the landlord.

The most significant omission in the Minister's remarks was that he did not tell us what will happen to tens of thousands of people in Wales and hundreds of thousands of people in the country who have no hope of getting a council house or a housing association property.

I pay tribute to the work of the tenants' organisations in the Principality and especially to the Welsh Tenants Federation, the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (Wales) and the Valleys Tenants and Residents Forum. It is significant that, whether they are Labour, independent, Liberal or Conservative local authorities, they are paying more attention to their tenants' wishes.

It is interesting that the Tenant Participation Advisory Service and the Welsh Tenants Federation were officially represented at the annual conference of the Welsh Institute of Housing, and that the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations symposium had tenants on its board and was subsidised by Housing for Wales, or Tai Cymru, as it is known in Wales.

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More local authorities and housing associations are keen on tenant participation and 85 tenants' groups are affiliated to TPAS (Wales), a figure which I am sure is also reflected in England and Scotland.

When looking at the work by local authorities in Wales, of whatever political colour, in dealing with tenants' rights and responsibilities, the picture is pleasing. In Aberconway, there have been considerable consultations with tenants over redevelopment proposals. In Colwyn, where there have been major flooding problems in the past two years, there have been consultations with tenants, and there is an excellent tenant service in the capital city of Wales, with a full-time tenant participation officer, who works well with our largest local authority housing provider. Similar work is being carried out in Taff Ely and in Ynys Môn.

The Swansea tenants federation has done sterling work, with the help and co-operation of the local authority in that great city. There have been surveys of tenants, development work with tenants in rural areas, and people have been trained to work with tenants throughout the Principality. We are assured that future developments will include reference to special needs, and the production during the next year of a number of publications by the bodies to which I referred.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on the Front Bench referred to the need to consult tenants more widely on the construction and design stage of housing, the management of estates and the membership of committees that run houses, whether owned by housing associations or by the local authorities, and the need to consult them on setting reasonable rents, tackling repairs and on major capital works. Those are all properly the responsibility and interest of tenants, whether private tenants of housing associations or local authority tenants in Wales and England.

I fear that much of what the Minister said about tenants simply homed in on the problems of the right to buy. That is an aspect of tenants' rights, but it is not the only one. In the previous Session of Parliament the Government tried to deal with tenants' rights in another way—by transferring them en bloc from local authorities either to private landlords or to housing associations. That was a gigantic flop in the Principality. It made no headway and Tai Cymru, which was charged with the responsibility, would be the first to admit that from beginning to end it was a notable disaster.

In exactly the same way, the Government think that, as a result of the forthcoming legislation on rents-to-mortgages, all will be well with the provision of housing for social need. That is not the case in the one instance in Wales when that ludicrous scheme was undertaken in Montgomeryshire. The scheme operated there by the Development Board for Rural Wales has been a failure, just like the scheme in Scotland. There is nothing in such initiatives for tenants. The problems go much deeper.

Many people have no desire to own their own homes. They want to rent because they do not want the burden or the responsibility of home ownership, particularly as millions of people, especially in the south-east of England are suffering because of the problems of the property market. The Government should re-examine some aspects of their housing policy from their own point of view and from that of tenants.

I do not expect the Minister to answer my specific points on Wales, but two practical steps could be taken to help tenants. The first relates to the new town in Montgomeryshire established by the Development Board for Rural Wales—it is effectively the last new town in Wales; the other is in my constituency in Cwmbran. The housing assets in those new towns were transferred from the development corporations to local authorities. Most previous transfers went relatively smoothly and, in Cwmbran, it went successfully. However, the Development Board for Rural Wales in Montgomeryshire does not take the same attitude towards such a transfer as that of other new towns in England.

I hope that not only will the tenants of the Development Board for Rural Wales be consulted, as the Government have promised, but that the results of the consultations will mean that their wishes will be abided by if they specifically ask to become the tenants of local authorities. If they wish to become tenants of a local authority or of a housing association they should have that right, and I hope that the wishes of the tenants in Montgomeryshire will be respected by the Welsh Office and by the Government. I hope that the tenants' position will not be determined by Government ideology, but as a result of meeting the genuine wishes of those who live in the houses.

It is a scandal that Tai Cymru, Housing for Wales, which has responsibility for the development of housing policy, particularly social housing, in the whole of the Principality, does not have on its board one member who represents local authorities. That is a sign of the way in which the Government treat local authorities, particularly housing authorities. The Minister said that he saw local authorities only as enablers. The people of Wales also see them as providers. Local authorities combine those roles, but, whatever they are, as the Minister said, they are certainly landlords. The landlord of hundreds of thousands of people in Wales is their local authority. It is wrong that not one representative of the local authorities in Wales is on the board of Tai Cymru. I hope that the Government will change their mind on that.

Similarly, it is proper that, as is the case in England, a representative of the tenants should be on the board of Tai Cymru—a representative either from the Welsh Tenants Federation or from the Tenants Participation Advisory Service (Wales). The views of tenants on all aspects of housing, but particularly on housing associations, would be valuable when Tai Cymru discusses its affairs.

Tai Cymru is only one of a number of non-elected bodies in Wales—quangos as we call them—which increasingly run public life in the Principality. I am concerned because although the overwhelming majority of the Welsh people, at least, have rejected the Government, the people who are placed on those boards to run public affairs are extremely partisan and belong on one side of the political fence. For that reason, I was troubled by the Minister's remarks. The Government have had their majority reduced substantially from 100 seats to 20 and I thought that they would adopt a more consensual role. I had hoped that in those parts of the country with their own Government Departments—Scotland and Wales—there would be an attempt to move away from confrontation towards consensus, especially on those bodies responsible for housing.

Unless we reach that consensus, I fear for the whole process of democracy in the Principality and in Scotland. I had hoped for some humility from the Government, rather than the arrogance that we have witnessed this morning.

11.55 am

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker, to make my maiden speech. It is fitting that you should be in the Chair, because you represent my neighbouring seat. You have been very helpful to me since my arrival in the House.

There is a variety of ways in which hon. Members arrive in this place. Some take the fast route, others the slow one, but I believe that I may have arrived by the trap-door. It was on 22 February only that we knew that my predecessor did not intend to stand again. On 10 March I was selected for the seat and it was on 11 March that the Prime Minister called the election. Such a process is not designed to help the heart or the nerves, but as the admen would say, "It takes the waiting out of the wanting". It is a special privilege for me to represent the constituency in which I have lived and worked for many years.

My predecessor, Alan Clark, was well known in the House. He was a learned and well-respected person who represented Plymouth, Sutton for 18 years. He had a distinguished career in the Ministry of Defence and in the Department of Trade and Industry. Of his many fine qualities, I believe that perhaps the finest was his ability to speak his mind, irrespective of others' reaction. That is a rare and important gift in any democracy. He will be sadly missed in the House and elsewhere.

Plymouth is well known to hon. Members, many of whom will have spent at least one holiday in Devon and Cornwall. No doubt, on a wet Thursday in August, they came to Plymouth to do their shopping in our excellent city centre. Hon. Members will be aware that Plymouth is located in a most beautiful part of the world, with the stark majesty of Dartmoor to the north, the rolling hills of South Hams to the east, the beauty of Plymouth sound and the English channel to the south and Cornwall to the west. It is free to get into Cornwall over the Tamar bridge, but one must pay to get back into Plymouth—a price well worth paying.

Plymouth is the home of the Plymouth Brethren, Plymouth gin and, perhaps most importantly, Plymouth Argyle. It is a city with a proud history and a great potential. There is another side to it, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a city of considerable need. It has a population of 250,000 and, today, 12·3 per cent. of our residents are unemployed, against a national unemployment average of 9·6 per cent. In the past 12 months unemployment in Plymouth has risen by 5·4 per cent.—the largest rise in the country. That may take hon. Members by surprise, because people think of Plymouth as an attractive, leisure city—but we have real needs.

The local authority still owns 20,000 council houses, many in poor condition. We have a growing housing waiting list and, for the first time in many years, homeless people on the list are now in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. That is of particular concern to me. The city also has a growing crime rate and a drugs problem. Many of my constituents are worried about crime and I shall come back to that problem in the coming days, months and years.

Plymouth is a city not just of leisure and beauty; too many of my constituents are out of work, do not have homes and do not have hope. I have committed myself to speaking on their behalf in this place. I shall do that in the years to come in the way that you have done, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I should like to put down two markers on behalf of my constituents, the first concerning crime. My constituents believe, and I agree with them, that we must punish much more severely those who commit crimes against the person. People who burgle, batter or rape must be locked away for a long time, not simply to deter others but to remove them from the streets so that they cannot commit the same crimes against other people. Our first approach when thinking of punishment must be the protection of innocent victims.

My constituents are fed up with hearing excuses about why people commit crime. They want us to talk more about the victims and what we will do to protect them. The Conservatives have an excellent record on funding the police force. Unfortunately, the nature of society today is causing crime to be on the increase. The present situation will not do.

As well as aiming to protect the innocent victims of crime by stiffer sentences, we should be examining the causes of crime and seeking to rediscover in society what I would call the traditional Christian values by which people learn at an early age to respect law and order, authority, other people and others' property. We must rediscover the importance at a young age of the family unit and of parental discipline. We have tended to turn our backs on those matters in the past 30 years. We have sown the wind and are reaping the whirlwind.

My second marker is about Devonport dockyard. The future of Plymouth as we know and love it will be decided in the next six months by the Government, because in that time they will decide whether DML, the private firm which runs Devonport dockyard, will be successful in winning the nuclear refit work on the Trident boat.

Hon. Members will know that Plymouth has grown over the years by being centred on the royal dockyard and the naval base. We have lost 7,000 jobs in the dockyard in the past seven years. If we do not win the nuclear refit work on the Trident, the dockyard will close and the naval base will be under great threat. It will be like tearing the heart out of Plymouth. Part of my job is to ensure that the Government make the right decision, as I am sure they will. I shall return to that issue time and again.

I appreciate that today we are debating tenancy matters, so I am grateful to the House for its indulgence in enabling me to refer in my maiden speech to other matters. I believe in home ownership, because it enhances one's sense of responsibility and self help. That is in the interests of every citizen. So we are right to encourage people to buy their own homes. The right-to-buy policy has been a success and I am sure that the rents-to-mortgages policy will be an equal success. I look forward to debating that in the months ahead.

However, I also recognise that there is a significant minority of people who do not wish, or are unable, to buy their own homes. That minority may be about 20 per cent. of the population. Many, though by no means all, of them are on modest incomes. The Government are right, in their approach to social housing problems, to concentrate on housing associations as the main provider of new affordable social housing. They are housing specialists and

[Mr. Gary Streeter]

are free from the ideological and political baggage that many local authorities carry around with them in their approach to housing. Again, the Government have been right in their approach to that matter.

The figures are revealing. Although we have had housing associations for at least 20 years, there are still 4·2 million local authority dwellings in England and Wales, and I apologise to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy), on the Opposition Front Bench, for not having the figures for Scotland. Against that figure, there are 645,000 housing association homes —83 as against 13 per cent. The difference in scale is enormous.

It is clear, whether we like it or not, that local authorities remain the major provider of social housing. That may not be the position 10 years from now, but we must review the situation as it exists. If tenants are to get a fair deal, and if we are to concentrate on tenants' rights and responsibilities, we must tackle the problems of the local authority management of housing. As a former housing chairman of Plymouth city council, I have some experience of that issue. Tenants are getting a raw deal all over the country from their local authority landlords and I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) that it is virtually impossible for a local authority to be a good, efficient and cost-effective landlord. By nature—one might say by culture—it is almost impossible.

When I was a law student at King's college, just along the water from here, in the late 1970s, I worked for three weeks in an Easter vacation for Southwark borough council on an agency job. My task, which I was privileged to do, involved my spraying bed bugs in council high-rise flats. That opened my eyes to the situation. I wonder how many other Conservative Members have worked for Southwark borough council. It was not a pleasant experience. I feel now, as I felt then, that there must be a better way to own and manage local authority housing. The answer is to diversify and to give opportunity and choice.

I admit that our approach in 1988 to provide tenants' choice has not proved an unqualified success. We have not seen wholesale voting by tenants to choose a new landlord. That should have happened, but it did not. A simile may be made with cases of battered wives, who, my partners in my law firm tell me, return time and again to their husbands. Nobody can work out why that happens. Or it is like the neglected child who clings even more closely to an uncaring parent? There is a bond and security in the relationship. It is fear of the unknown, perhaps best expressed by the expression "Better the devil you know than the one you do not know".

Whatever the reason, tenants have not voted in a wholesale way to choose a new landlord. My experience as housing chairman in Plymouth while the process was being debated was that the 1988 legislation drove tenants closer to their landlords in an effort to fend off what they saw as an unattractive policy. It has been unfortunate, but if tenants have chosen to stay with their landlord, we must respect that choice and approach the issue on another basis. *[Interruption.]* I think I hear cries of, "Hear, hear" from the Opposition Benches. That is not a distinguished start for a maiden speaker.

If tenants do not choose another landlord, it behoves the Government to change the way in which local authority landlords do their business. The answer is to cut housing departments free from local authorities in every management sense and convert them to what I would call semi-detached housing boards. In the way that we have created bus companies by the Transport Act 1985—by creating companies or boards of a semi-detached nature, owned by the local authority but enjoying a fresh approach to management—we must do the same in housing, creating a mean, lean management, but still owned by the local authority and largely free of local political interference. I have come to the conclusion that no real purpose is served by political interference at local level in housing management. It is just another encumbrance.

The boards should comprise senior housing officers, one or two councillors at the most—they should be sensible ones—and, most importantly, tenants' representatives and representatives from the business, finance and property sectors. Such boards should employ few people directly, but should buy in every service they need when they want it from the right source, at the right time and at the right price. That is the way in which to give an effective service.

Having served on a local authority for about six years, my conclusion is that it is difficult to reform a local authority from the inside out because local authorities have a culture that has gone on from generation to generation. The fresh start for housing management would be to create the new boards which could then buy in what they wanted, cut free from the culture and baggage of local authority control.

Local authority housing departments today suffer from on-costs from all sorts of other council departments, such as treasury services, repair and maintenance services and the town clerk's department. Would not it be better if the housing boards could buy in legal, financial, repair and maintenance and even allocation services from people who were specialist, lean, mean and able to do the job?

What would be the result of my suggestions? We should have public sector ownership of houses, which tenants appear to want, with all the benefits of the private sector, including efficiency and the cost-effectiveness. There would be massive savings if we cut housing departments free from the baggage that they currently have to endure. Those savings could be spent on improving the housing stock and the service delivered to tenants. At the end of the day, we are here to serve the tenants. Those savings could be spent on delivering excellence rather than on keeping traditions alive.

The most important part of any approach to housing management is tenants' participation, and other hon. Members have made that point. From my time as housing chairman, I recall that we spent a lot of time with tenants, listening to and learning from what they said, and entering into full and frank discussions. One of the most interesting discussions I had with tenants' groups concerned a forthcoming rent increase. It was a bit like asking turkeys to vote for Christmas, but we sat down, we talked the issue through and we reached a consensus. Tenant participation is absolutely critical and it is part of the way forward.

Some people may say that it is not necessary radically to reform the local authority management of housing. I know that it is. I shall never forget my deep sense of shock when I learned, after three months of being chair of

housing in Plymouth, that if any of our tenants needed a new bath, it took five different tradesmen, who were members of the engineer's department, to install it. The biggest shock of all was that the officers sought to justify that to me as being in the tenants' interest. Can one conceive of such a thing in the private sector? One goes to the right person and gets the job done. One does not need such numbers of people to get the work done. We are dealing not only with reforming an institution but with changing a culture.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to take two brief points into account. First, will he do something about the fact that many Labour-controlled local authorities are sitting on empty housing land? In the same localities, there are housing associations which pay market prices to buy land on which to build. Will my hon. Friend consider introducing measures to force Labour-controlled authorities to transfer that land at nil cost to local housing associations so that more houses can be built at affordable rents for local people? Secondly, in the great capital receipts debate, will my hon. Friend consider, if there is to be any release of capital receipts, only authorising local authorities to transfer capital receipts to housing associations so that they can use the money to provide social housing far more cost-effectively than local authorities can?

We now have a real opportunity to shake up housing management. If we are to tackle the problem of social housing, bearing in mind that 4 million families are still local authority tenants, we must be radical in our approach to housing departments. They will not reform themselves, so we must do that job for them. We must set up streamlined housing boards which can buy in the services they want when they want them. In that way the tenants who, after all, we are here to serve, will get the deal that they deserve.

12.15 pm

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): I congratulate the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) on his maiden speech. It is obvious that he will take up his constituents' concerns and I am sure that we shall hear a great deal more from him in the years ahead in this Parliament.

I have found the debate in general a depressing experience. We have heard many times from Conservative Members the ideological opposition to local authority housing and the obsession with owner-occupation. It is a peculiarly British obsession: few other countries in Europe believe that everyone should aim for owner-occupation or that renting has an inferior status. The obsession with owner-occupation seemed to dominate speeches by Conservative Members.

What tenants want—indeed, what the majority of people want from housing, whether they are tenants or not—is security. They want to be able to live in a property which is suitable in size and in location. They want to be able to repair the property or to have it repaired, and they want to be able to live in a property that they can afford, whether through rent or through mortgage. Those aspirations do not vary much among owner-occupiers or among tenants.

In recent years, it has become far more difficult for owner-occupiers to meet those aspirations; one has only to ask the people whose homes have been repossessed in the past few years to realise that. It is even more difficult for tenants to meet those aspirations. I found it depressing that there has been no recognition in the debate of the fact that there has been a diminution of tenants' rights and an increase in the difficulty of renting.

Many tenants with private landlords have considerably less security than they had two or three years ago, with shorthold tenancies and altered succession rights. Many private landlords now refuse to accept as tenants people who are on benefits. Rents have been forced up in the private sector and in the public sector because of the withdrawal of subsidies. The Government should be seriously concerned about the housing association sector, where payment of rent relies increasingly on housing benefits. If the rents were fixed at market levels, few housing association tenants would be able to afford them.

I will deal mainly with tenants' choice and with the reality of what "choice" means for many people. I shall hold an advice surgery this evening in my constituency and I know what I shall find when I get there. There will be a queue of people with housing problems and there will be people who are on local authority waiting lists.

For many authorities, waiting lists might as well not exist because no one is being rehoused from them. How much choice do people have? Many local authorities—certainly many in London—operate a one-offer policy of a suitable flat or house. That applies even to direct offers and not only to offers of bed and breakfast.

Transfers of existing tenants in my local authority and in many others have virtually ceased because authorities are struggling to keep their heads above water in dealing with homelessness. It is not good enough to blame local authorities. My local authority, Waltham Forest, has less than 2 per cent. empty stock. It does not use bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless families and has worked hard to keep out of that. Meetings with the Department of the Environment on housing investment programme applications have resulted in the Department praising the authority's record on management.

No new houses are being built and investment is being cut. As a result, local authorities cannot cope. I am in favour of tenants having the right to repairs and improvements. The vast majority of people agree on that, but a right to repair means little to someone with four kids in a two-bedroomed flat on the 19th floor of a tower block. It does not mean much to the private tenant either. An elderly private tenant in a property which is in bad condition will not be impressed by talk about the right to repair, because it is far from easy to get the necessary action through environmental health officers. Tenants' rights and choices cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of the housing policy. When we have a housing strategy that does not address supply, new building and large-scale improvement, it is pointless to talk about tenants' rights.

Hon. Members have spoken about consultation and power. We all accept that in the past local authorities have been paternalistic. That would have been a fair accusation against many local authorities 20 or 30 years ago, but in recent years—certainly in the case of many Labour authorities—that is no longer the case. The Minister mentioned a housing action trust in my constituency in the context of tenants' rights and of tenants being able to choose. That housing action trust is in Waltham Forest and it is instructive to look at its history.

[Mr. Neil Gerrard]

The trust started when the local authority looked at what could be done on run-down estates. The authority produced schemes in conjunction with tenants and involved tenants in the redevelopment of the estates, but the Government refused to sanction the loans necessary for the work. The Government were then asked whether they would permit the setting up of a tenant-controlled company which would take over the management of the estates and do the work. That, too, was refused, and we ended up with the housing action trust. During the setting of the trust, the then Minister made some concessions to tenants. He said that he was willing to give guarantees about future letting policies and rent levels and the ability of the tenants to choose their landlord on the expiry of the housing action trust. However, none of that was translated into legislation, and if the HAT board chose to do so it could ignore those guarantees. If the Minister means what he says about being interested in tenants' rights he should seek to embody in legislation the guarantees given to the Waltham Forest housing action trust.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): My hon. Friend may be aware that my constituents are watching carefully what is happening in Walthamstow. They have been offered a HAT and have been told that they can eventually be asked to be taken back under council control. When they asked whether there was a guarantee that the council would take them back, they found that there was no legal requirement for that. They know that under council control they have security of tenure—a matter which was raised by Conservative Members. They cannot be put out under one pretext or another and their rents cannot be raised sky high. They would probably favour the improvements to run-down properties that a HAT would bring, if the Government would give the guarantees that they seem unwilling to give.

Mr. Gerrard: I agree. Those issues were raised during the setting up of the Waltham Forest HAT. At that time, Ministers said that such guarantees should be given. As I have said, however, those guarantees have never been backed by legislation and it would be possible for the HAT board to ignore them. That seriously worries tenants, and I hope that the Minister will consider it.

It is instructive to look at the history of the tenants who were involved in the setting up of the Waltham Forest HAT. The local authority encouraged tenants to become involved, but the Government set up a HAT board on which they were not prepared to have a tenant majority. If tenant power and consultation mean anything, they should mean being prepared to give real power to tenants, allowing them to form a majority on a board and to make real decisions about the management of their properties and expenditure on them. Often that is where the line is drawn. Tenant consultation is allowed so long as it does not involve real decisions or the ability to spend, but the right to manage and to choose must include the right to control and spend money.

Time and again, the Opposition have said that real rights and choices for tenants must be explained and incorporated in an overall housing strategy which addresses supply and the value of rented housing. The Government must not simply adopt policies that allow for social rented housing to be run down, but that is the reality of what is happening.

12.28 pm

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): It is not surprising that the Government have tabled this motion, because they have lots to crow about. I understand why they want an outing of praise and I am pleased to give it. Paradoxically, many of the more socially progressive, liberal ideas that the Labour party was proposing 30 years ago—about the last time that one could discern any thought from the Labour party—have been delivered over the past 10 years by the Conservative Government. They have been delivered by pursuing the tenets of capitalism and variety of choice rather than by the centralising force of socialist bureaucracy that was the dream in the 1950s and 1960s.

In my constituency there is a wide variety of housing provision, all of it successful. I am lucky in that there are more housing associations in my constituency than there are in any other part of the country. This enormous variety provides, for example, for ethnic minorities, single mothers, single women, those who wish to ensure that their homes belong not to just to them but to succeeding generations, those wanting short-term stays or people who are being rehabilitated into society. This wide variety is the essence of Conservative philosophy.

This debate on tenants' rights involves something far greater than just tenants' rights. Tenants can now have a real say in framing their destinies. In my constituency, this means more than just passive rights. Tenants are not just being consulted; they are putting together plans for the architecture of the estates on which they live, for the security of those estates and for the rents that they will pay in future. I know that when the North Kensington city challenge bid comes to the Department of the Environment, one of the factors that will most recommend it is that it is not a bid in which tenants have just been consulted—it is a bid in which they have led.

Then there is leasehold reform. That campaign sprung more often from the Back Benches than from the Front Benches. Many of those Back-Benchers, on both sides of the House, who started the campaign are no longer with us, which only shows that a successful campaign can take generations of Parliament to achieve. Now, reform will be undertaken in this Session and commonhold, as the Minister kindly confirmed, will follow on within the lifetime of this Government. It is hugely appreciated that we have all aspects of leasehold reform firmly on board.

The greatest change in housing provision is the thriving condition of the private sector. That is very visible in the centre of London, where more and more people are turning to private rented accommodation. My borough has supported a business expansion scheme to provide assured tenancies for its staff. That is a perfect example of how capitalism can achieve fairness and equity in the housing market in a way that socialism never can.

Against this blue sky of success, it might seem churlish of me to dwell for a moment on a cloud of worry—the position in London of statutory tenants. Let me at once declare an interest in that I am myself a statutory tenant, although none of the concerns on which I shall elaborate apply to me. Over the past two or three years, statutory tenants in the centre of London have been getting rent

increases that are clearly out of kilter with other increases. They are not two or three times the rate of inflation, although such increases would imply a real change of resources out of people's private incomes and into the housing costs. They are not increases of five, six or seven times the rate of inflation, which would be punitive and which the Government would not endorse. Regularly, rent increases for statutory tenants in the centre of London are 10 times the rate of inflation, and this is causing considerable social cruelty.

This distortion in the market is a result of the fact that, in the centre of London, the comparison of rents made by the rent assessment board when looking at statutory tenants is not with a genuinely free market. It is, rather, one distorted by the overwhelming demand for business accommodation rents and by the presence of foreign tenants. Thus it is that in whole mansion blocks in my constituency of Kensington, indigenous tenants are being forced out by rent increases. They make way not for other residents but for business lettings, where the tenants may be wholly transitory, or for foreign tenants who may visit for only one or two months a year. Many mansion blocks stand almost empty while every year indigenous tenants, as a result of rent assessments that take place every two years, are being forced out by rent increases of 30 or 40 per cent. It is clear that it is not the Government's intention that that should happen.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, being the intelligent and sympathetic man that he is, has very much taken the matter on board. That is why some weeks ago he made a public commitment to examine the problem. In an open letter he wrote:

"The size of increases in some parts of London has been somewhat higher than elsewhere in the country given the generally higher level of rents which are being achieved in the assured tenancy sector in these areas where foreign demand is an important factor. We will therefore review the guidance to rent assessment committees to see whether any special consideration needs to be given to these particular factors which are affecting rent levels."

That commitment attracted much publicity at the time and was widely welcomed by my constituents. This morning my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said, even before being pressed, that the Department was about to take public advice. The decision to open up the matter for public consideration is an enormously welcome step forward.

We all realise, as did my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning when he made the commitment, that to change instructions to rent assessment committees so that they take account of business lettings and foreign lettings will require a degree of primary legislation. It might require about 10 lines in the housing Bill that will come before the House in the autumn. It is with the intention of forming the appropriate clause that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has said, to my delight, that he will be accepting evidence from the statutory tenant sector and from others who are interested in the problem.

As I have said, I am talking only of a cloud, but it is an important one for those of us who represent central London constituencies. Against an otherwise blue sky—it is ever more apparent to the public and in the provision of housing throughout London that the Government are doing so much in housing matters—this one concern shows up much more darkly than it need. I welcome the Government's initiative in putting matters right by accepting evidence over the next six to eight weeks. I shall welcome the relevant clause in the housing Bill that will come before the House in the autumn, which will put the matter to rights. I trust that it will give statutory tenants the protection that the Government have always said that they deserve. That will be not only a legal protection but protection from being bankrupted out of their own homes.

12.38 pm

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I am pleased to be able to speak about tenants' rights, opportunities and participation, which are extremely important subjects for my constituents. Cambridge city council was mentioned in the housing investment programme as being one of the top 50 councils that were well ahead of the field, especially in terms of tenants' participation. I welcome the debate and I am pleased to be able to draw to the attention of the House the success of Cambridge city council in the schemes in which it has participated. The relevant schemes have been in existence for three years and have been well developed.

Two tenants sit on each of three housing sub-committees—development, management and policy. Although the law prohibits voting by tenants, they have a right to speak, to take part in discussions and to influence decision making at the end of the day. Tenants in the private-rented sector do not have those rights.

I was glad to hear the Minister say that local authorities will continue to have a role as providers as well as enablers. Cambridge city council demonstrates well that local authorities can be good providers and that should not be forgotten. There are good and bad providers in every sector and it should be recognised that local authorities can be good and that there are impressive examples, especially in Cambridge.

There is some anxiety in my constituency about forthcoming legislation on compulsory competitive tendering. Some of the progress made with tenant participation in Cambridge may be eroded if tenants cannot choose their contractors. If the selection must be made as the result of competitive tendering, rather than on the basis of the best quality, that may limit choice. Will the Minister take that into consideration? I am aware that a paper on competitive tendering is to be published soon.

Although the proposed legislation is welcome, the Government are still fiddling while Rome burns. The Audit Commission report clearly showed that insufficient housing investment is creating problems of real concern to many of my constituents. The hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) mentioned the importance of making land available for social housing. I support that approach, and ask the Minister to consider carefully a plot of land on the edge of Cambridge known as Clay farm, which could accommodate 900 houses. The city council intended to develop that site with housing associations in the provision of social housing for the people of Cambridge, which would have contributed a great deal to alleviating the housing shortage in my constituency.

Unfortunately, that land was put into the green belt by the Conservative and Social Democrat groups on the county council, whose decision was later ratified by the Secretary of State for the Environment. That issue should be reopened and the decision reconsidered, because that land is desperately needed. It is difficult to see how additional housing can be provided if it remains out of use.

[Mrs. Anne Campbell]

Hon. Members in all parts of the House stressed that the lack of capital building has caused an increase in the number of homeless families. The 16 and 17-year-olds whom one sees on the streets are the visible face of the housing crisis, but other aspects are visible to those of us who represent local communities as Members of Parliament or councillors. I refer for example to the increasing number of families who find themselves in inappropriate housing.

About 70 families in my constituency are waiting to be transferred to more suitable accommodation. Raising a family should be a joyful and rewarding experience, but for many of my constituents it is a fraught and stressful one. Few male Members of Parliament have spent time at home being economically inactive and looking after children. I am glad to be one of the new women Members of Parliament who can speak from personal experience of the stresses imposed on family life when conditions are less than adequate.

Children and adults need space. Boisterous youngsters need room to play, let off steam and to fight if necessary. If they do not have it, it can create intolerable family stresses that manifest themselves in all sorts of ways.

When a family is marooned in a one or two-bedroomed flat on an upper floor of a block, with no lift or access to a garden, everyday living becomes something of a nightmare. Many of the young mothers to whom I speak feel themselves trapped when going to the shops, hanging out the washing or collecting a prescription—activities which any of us would consider a normal part of everyday life. However, if one is a young mother with a baby and toddler, and has to carry both of them and a pushchair down two flights of stairs, and the toddler wants to take his trike as well, they become almost impossible tasks. Coming back is even worse, because the children are tired and so is the mother. The other day, I spoke to a young mother who had been faced with a choice between leaving her baby at the bottom of the stairs and leaving her shopping there. When she returned for the shopping she found that it had disappeared: it had been stolen.

The problem is difficult to describe, because it is largely invisible in the streets; it is a problem, nevertheless, and it is increasing rapidly. To my distress, I find that as a new Member of Parliament I can offer little hope to constituents who come to me—often in desperation, even tears—because I can see no way out. Unless the Government are prepared to change their policy and make more housing available, I fear that the situation will become worse and worse.

I urge the Government to put real power into people's hands. I urge them to give some self-respect to young mothers and to return some real choice to their lives—to liberate them from the stresses imposed by their own families, whom they should be able to enjoy. One of way of doing that would be to release capital receipts, thus allowing councils to build more houses. That would not only help homeless families, but have a tremendous effect on the families whom I have described.

12.45 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): My constituency is as relevant to the debate as any other—although it may not be as obviously relevant as the constituency that I fought in the 1987 election. Glasgow, Central is still emerging from a form of feudal Stalinist oppression in regard to housing.

North Colchester is such a diverse constituency that, if the Government have a problem relating to a particular issue, it is likely to affect that constituency. The garrison, for example, is the pride of the town, but it now faces the perceived threat of the "Options for Change" proposals. The university—one of the fastest-expanding universities in the United Kingdom, particularly in the field of research—is under strain in connection with a capital programme, but, despite its youth, it has already fathered some distinguised alumni. My right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) is its first Cabinet Minister; its first chief constable is the Warwickshire chief constable, Mr. Peter Joslin; and, believe it or not, another alumnus is the President of Costa Rica, Essex university's first Nobel peace prize winner.

North Colchester contains every type of education. It has grammar schools, comprehensive schools, a higher education institute and an excellent adult education college. That, too, represents a potential problem for a Minister. It also contains nearly every type of agriculture—even fishing, which is under threat of marine gravel extraction and the building of the new London airport, Marinair, in the Thames estuary. I assure the House that the supply of oysters will continue uninterrupted, however.

All types of industry and commerce are represented: heavy and light industry, retail and services. We have an excellent football team, the U's, which has just got back into the league, but is in difficulties over its stadium. We also have an extensive heritage. Colchester was the Romans' first capital of England, and the largest Norman keep in Europe was subsequently built there. It became Britain's oldest recorded town and witnessed a grim seige in the civil war—reminding us how hard fought were our present Parliament's precious powers. There is much to preserve and treasure there.

Today, the constituency stretches from a thriving commercial centre to the almost unaltered landscapes, under huge open skies, which so inspired so many of Constable's paintings. At times, it may be difficult to remember that North Colchester is in the same county as the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess)—where a Constable seems more often to be the man who asks you where you got all those televisions in your garage. Now, however, we must revise our preconceptions of Basildon, which has thrown off the socialist yoke.

Naturally, there are all types of housing and housing-related problems in North Colchester.

That diversity of character was most ably and sensitively represented by the former Member of Parliament for North Colchester, Sir Antony Buck. I do not know whether I am in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but you may have spied him in the Serjeant at Arms' Box.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman should never tempt the Chair, and he was out of order.

Mr. Jenkin: I apologise.

Experience of the civil war made Colchester a town of religious and political tolerance and diversity. It has become a town where a man can come from, for example, Northern Ireland, and few will worry whether he be a

Catholic or a Protestant. Sir Antony taught me not merely that it would be a privilege to sit here but that it would be a privilege to represent all the people of North Colchester —of all classes, colours, creeds and politics. That was in the tradition, I might add, of my noble Friend Lord Alport, also a former Member for the town. They have set me a fine and difficult example to follow. The people of North Colchester hold them both in remarkable affection and esteem. Sir Antony also distinguished himself here, in that after years of argument and controvery over defence, for example, it is due to people such as he that we can now look socialists in the face with pride and say, "You now subscribe to our views."

My succession, however, was not universally acclaimed. North Colchester overlaps two boroughs, Colchester and Tendring district, which are both Liberal Democrat-controlled. Colchester borough council welcomed both me and my hon. Friend the Member for South Colchester and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale) with a somewhat barbed congratulation to work

"in a spirit of partnership to overcome the Borough's worsening housing crisis".

How bad that crisis is is a matter of opinion, but they may be surprised; I am most happy to oblige the councils of both Tendring and Colchester and to work, as is my duty, in that spirit alongside them.

I invite them to examine with me the possibilities of working to expand the role of housing associations in the area, which currently represent only a tiny proportion of the overall housing stock. In particular, I invite them to explore the possibility of seeking large-scale voluntary transfers of council housing stock to the private sector —some 12,500 homes.

In Colchester borough's motion, councillors call for the release of local authority capital receipts. Under this Government, or in reality, any Government, that is a blind alley, leading back to the general failure of councils as providers of housing, let alone to all the public expenditure implications. Therefore, I urge them, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to put aside all party differences. Let us see what we can achieve to help the people whom we are all elected to represent.

There have been many exciting developments in housing during the last 12 years, or even longer. When Sir Antony Buck was first elected to the Colchester division in 1961, home ownership was already reasonably high, at 48·4 per cent. Today it is well over 70 per cent. Tenants' rights in the public sector and, to a certain extent, in the private sector have been dramatically enhanced. We see exciting opportunities for mobility in housing between the rented and owner-occupied sectors through schemes such as rents-to-mortgages.

The real test of Government policy, however, whether local or national, is how well opportunities can be made to match the aspirations of the people who most need to improve their circumstances, whether the urban or the rural poor. Let us not talk merely in materialistic terms. Great visions are based upon great values. People's well-being depends as much upon the ability to control their own destinies, to make choices, as upon bricks and mortar and state handouts. We need to raise aspirations as much as funds.

I was delighted by the Minister's comments and I urge him to continue his mission to increase tenants' rights— not just for council tenants but for housing association and private tenants. There is something of a paradox in urging north Colchester's council tenants to move to the housing association sector given that future tenants—not so much existing tenants—may have fewer rights than they would enjoy in the public sector at present. There is a need for a level playing field between public and private sector landlords.

The early large-scale voluntary transfers can really only be described as 50 per cent. successful. Many of them were far too large. In Colchester and Tendring, let us look for small multiple voluntary transfers and let us try to preserve and to enhance the rights of existing and future tenants in the process. Nor should we ignore the public expenditure consequences. There is some concern that voluntary transfers of public housing stock can have bad consequences for taxpayers generally.

It has become a cliché to say that an Englishman's home is his castle, but I invite all councillors in North Colchester to work together to that fundamental and, indeed, democratic end. It will be a rewarding privilege to help them to pursue that end in this citadel of democracy, this sovereign Parliament, and to continue Colchester's historic development, not least as an important gateway to Europe. I am reminded that, not long after the Romans left Colchester, the Danes arrived. Long may that partnership also thrive.

12.57 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): I congratulate the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on his maiden speech, which was well and clearly argued. He gave an interesting resumé of the history of his constituency and paid proper tribute to his predecessor, who is clearly held in respect and affection in the House.

We must examine tenants' rights in the overall context of the Government's housing policy—I am tempted to say, "the Government's lack of housing policy", as the lack of investment in housing in Britain is all too apparent. There is a shortage of homes and a consequent growth in homelessness. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) mentioned the appalling plight of young people living in cardboard boxes, not only in the capital, but now in other major cities throughout the country.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) said, it is not only visible homelessness on the streets that we have to worry about, but hidden homelessness. Young couples who cannot get homes of their own and who have been living with their parents for several years come to our surgeries and tell us of the resulting pressures and tensions of family life.

We hear much from Conservative Members about the right to buy. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith rightly mentioned the right to rent, which if implemented which would bring us to the right of everyone in the country to a decent home. For far too long in the 1980s we debated tenure and nothing else. The Opposition are not against owner-occupation. We are in favour of home ownership, but we recognise that people have the right to choose not to be home owners if they want instead to have a home to rent. Many people prefer to rent. Younger people often need to be mobile—to move around the country—because of the requirements of their employment. Older people may not want the responsibility of repairing and looking after a property; they may prefer to rent because it suits their circumstances. Moreover,

[Mr. Clive Betts]

some people—the unemployed and poor—cannot afford to choose to buy. Those people should have the right to choose to have a home to rent. That is the only alternative open to them.

During the 1980s there was a massive decline in investment in public sector housing. If the Government could show that there had been a corresponding increase in investment in private sector homes, perhaps they could argue that by restricting investment in the public sector they had allowed a growth in the private sector and that the total number of homes provided was the same, but that is not the case. We have seen a decline in the public sector, but there has been no consequent comparable increase in the private sector.

In Sheffield the local authority's borrowing allocation has fallen by more than a third since 1979. Early in the 1980s, we were promised by the Government that all the resources from council house sales would be made available to local authorities to spend on providing new homes and improving existing ones. It is not simply that local authorities cannot spend accumulated past receipts. To put it in numerical terms, the city of Sheffield has £21 million of receipts from sales of capital assets this year which it cannot spend. At the same time, we have growing waiting lists and disrepair and houses are in need of improvement.

In 1979 a person could go to Sheffield housing department and virtually get a key over the counter. One could get a key to a desirable property within two years. It now takes 10 years on the waiting list to obtain the same property. In 1979 the number of homeless families rehoused in Sheffield was 150. The number has increased more than tenfold during the past 13 years.

The city of Sheffield and its authority are not against other forms of rented housing. We have developed plans with housing associations. We have supported co-operatives. There is a successful newly built co-operative in my constituency in the suburb of Darnall. We have supported management co-ops. Recently we transferred some properties in Hyde Park in Sheffield to a management co-op. But all those extra new initiatives should be in addition to the local authority's role in providing houses, not instead of it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith was right when he said that housing associations have a higher vacancy rate than local authorities. They also have higher management costs. I am not sure that Conservative Members have thought through the costs or whether the Treasury would be prepared to bear them, as the Government gradually transfer more houses out of the local authority sector.

Tenants' rights are not merely about the right to opt out of local authority control. Tenants' rights have been negotiated and agreed between tenants and local authorities over many years, long before the Government legislated. I shall list just some of the rights that have been available to tenants in Sheffield by agreement and negotiation.

There is a proper tenancy agreement. It is not merely a one-sided list of dos and don'ts for tenants, but a proper agreement negotiated between the tenants and the local authority many years ago. The agreement included a right to repair far in advance of what the Government introduced in their legislation. No tenant is prepared to use the right provided by the Government because it is so cumbersome and bureaucratic.

There is also a consultation agreement between tenants and the local authority in Sheffield. It has been properly drawn up and implemented by negotiation between the two parties. The consultation arrangements include the right for tenants to sit on area committees as part of the decentralisation of housing management. In Sheffield we agreed that the tenants on those area committees should have the right not merely to speak but to vote. But what happened? The Government legislated and took the right to vote away from tenants on matters that affected their homes. Where are the rights of tenants in that Government policy?

By negotiation, we gave tenants the right to compensation for improvements that they carried out. That is already policy in Sheffield. We have given young people the right to register on the housing list at 16, although we recognise that in many cases it is a hollow right because when people go on the list the length of time that they have to wait grows because there is a shortage of accommodation.

We gave tenants the right to inspect their files and obtain information. For all the knocking that Ministers like to give Sheffield, this year Sheffield city council won a national award for the quality of the information that it provided to tenants and the way in which it was presented.

Every tenant in Sheffield had the right to have central heating installed, through a leasing scheme. What happened? When the Government changed the capital rules, leasing was caught up in capital controls and tenants no longer have that right.

The workings of the public sector borrowing requirement rule make an absolute nonsense. Two couples may live side by side in a semi-detached property—one couple has bought their council house and the others are still council tenants. The couple who have bought their council house can ask the gas company to install central heating and then pay for it in monthly instalments on their gas bill. That is an acceptable investment in the private sector, and the Government support it. The gas company borrows the money for the investment from private sector institutions. The tenants next door may not have chosen to buy their house, or perhaps cannot afford to do so. They could ask the local authority for central heating, offering to pay for it in extra rent each week, and the local authority could borrow money from the same financial institutions as the gas company. But that cannot happen because of the restrictions on capital expenditure that the Government have imposed on local authorities and which they tightened up in the most recent legislation. There is discrimination against tenants and in Sheffield a tenant's right to central heating has been removed.

In Sheffield, tenants had the right to proper planned maintenance schemes, but the last set of capital changes introduced by the Government removed a local authority's right to spend all its capital receipts on non-prescribed expenditure.

There has been a lot of talk in the House about partnership. We also had a partnership scheme in Sheffield, which involved the city council, housing associations and private builders, but the Government introduced legislation to prevent local authorities from poursuing such partnership schemes. That is how the

Government have treated the provision of decent rented accommodation and tenants' rights to enjoy such accommodation.

It is not merely a question of the right to opt out and to transfer. Opposition Members are not denying that tenants should be allowed to choose a different landlord, if they so wish. It is a question of creating a level playing field for opting out. The Government's housing policy seems to have allowed tenants the right to opt for another landlord, but has tried to encourage them to do so by starving local authorities of capital resources and by switching resources to schemes such as housing action trusts. Tenants are tempted to choose a different landlord, not because they want to, but because they are presented with no alternative as the resources are not available to improve and modernise their homes properly within the local authority sector.

We hear much about tenants' rights in the council sector, but what about rights for private sector tenants? When will the Government give those tenants the right to buy? Why will they not do that? What about giving private tenants the right to transfer into local authority tenure, instead of the other way around? No local authority tenants in Sheffield, offered the right to be the tenants of private landlords, are taking the offer up, but if private sector tenants in Sheffield were offered the right to become tenants of the local authority, there would be a queue a mile long outside the town hall tomorrow morning of people wanting to exercise that choice—if the Government were prepared to offer it.

Ministers often talk as though every council estate is a shambles, in a state of massive disrepair with a poor environment, and as though tenants were clamouring to get off all council estates, but that is not true. There are many high-quality council estates in my constituency where tenants are very satisfied. They want the right to repair and to call the local authority to task if the standards of service laid down are not adhered to. They want a proper complaints procedure, and proper consultation. But they do not want to change their landlord. They want a decent housing service, but they do not necessarily want to run it. They want the local authority to have the resources to do the job properly.

We can talk about quality all the time. It is interesting that at the last AMA conference which I attended, the then Secretary of State for the Environment came along and talked an awful lot about quality in local government. I think that he mentioned it 12 times in his speech, but he never referred to resources once. By themselves, resources do not ensure quality. I do not believe in simply throwing money at problems, but we need resources if quality is to be delivered.

The Government's commitment to tenants' rights is only skin deep. It is a camouflage to cover up their failure to invest properly in our housing stock by providing new homes and repairing and modernising existing homes. What about the fundamental rights of those people with no home? Perhaps it is because so many Tory hon. Members own three or four homes that they have no compassion for those who have no home at all.

The Government have failed to meet the genuine aspirations of the people for decent homes and have failed to deliver the fundamental right of everyone to have a decent home. That right must be one of the bases of a civilised society, but the Government have failed to meet it.

1.7 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): It is a pleasure to congratulate those who have made their maiden speeches, in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), who brought fluency and ability to our proceedings. Like many other hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches, he established a balance between making relevant and powerful political points and following the necessary conventions of the House by describing, with considerable interest, his constituency and by paying tribute to his predecessor Sir Antony Buck, who will be remembered with affection and respect by the whole House. His parting shot about the influence of the vikings in 1992 will not have gone unnoticed.

I apologise to hon. Members and to the Minister because I will be unable to be present during the wind-up speeches. As far as it is relevant, I declare an interest as an adviser to the Building Employers Confederation. The subject of right to buy has featured significantly in the debate and there is no doubt that it has considerably enhanced the lives of individuals. However, another factor has not been covered adequately—the influence of the right-to-buy scheme on neighbourhoods and communities. There is no doubt that, when a fair number of houses are transferred to the private sector under right to buy, the improvements that the new home owners bring to their homes will enhance the whole neighbourhood, first by contrast and then by example and encouragement. I have seen that happen in east and north Taunton where there were previously heavy concentrations of council accommodation on the Halcon and Lyngford estates.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) about some of the rasher talk on the release of capital receipts. In some cases, such as with my local authority in Taunton, the Liberals are even more extreme in that regard than the Labour party. Undoubtedly, if all that money were to be released, it would have serious economic effects, particularly when central Government are now making such a great demand, through the borrowing requirement, on available resources. I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West and other hon. Members have said.

We are moving towards the point at which owner-occupation in this country may reach a ceiling. Owner-occupation in Britain is much higher than in many other similar countries. In west Germany, for example, nearly 50 per cent. of housing is in the private rented sector. In Britain it is only 8 per cent. We have an enormous amount to do to encourage development of the private rented sector, which in many respects is a more desirable way of meeting housing need, particularly for single people, than is council provision. In west Germany and Canada, less than 5 per cent. of the housing stock is publicly owned. The private sector plays a powerful role in those countries, though not through owner-occupation. The proportion is similar in Australia and New Zealand.

As I said, owner-occupation in Britain may be reaching its ceiling. There are many advantages of owner-occupation and I have mentioned some of them. In the past 20 or 25 years there has been no doubt that buying and owning a home has been probably the best investment a person could make. It has improved the position, certainly financially, of many individuals, primarily because of the strange fluctuation of house values in Britain.

[Mr. David Nicholson]

The ceiling may now have been reached. We have seen a considerable slipping back in house values in recent years and we are unlikely to see the house price spirals of the past 20 years continue in the next decade or so. An organisation of economic and regulatory analysts based in St. James's has considered Britain not as a home ownership economy but as a home borrowership economy and has said that the three conditions that are required for the smooth operation of a home borrowership economy are not likely to be present in the next three years. Those conditions are rising nominal house prices, rising incomes and affordable interest rates.

Present economic circumstances militate against each of those. In addition, the Government's requirement of low inflation—which, I believe, through our membership of the ERM and other factors, will be attained—plus the number of vacant properties now available in the private sector, will affect the value of house prices in the next few years.

We must also consider accommodation for those who are not able, or do not wish, to buy in the private sector. I, too, wish to refer to a recent report by the Audit Commission, a body which has not been hostile to the Government or to Conservative principles. There is much in the report that my hon. Friends and I can welcome in terms of the use of the housing stock by local authorities which do not use it effectively. The Minister referred to such abuses and I will not enlarge on those points.

The director of the Audit Commission, Howard Davies, sums up the report by saying:

> "Under the present system, the supply gap is unbridgeable and there is little evidence of fresh initiatives to overcome the investment shortfall."

I referred earlier to the campaign being conducted in the south-west by *The Western Morning News* on the whole issue of low-cost housing provision related to capital receipts. That newspaper has revealed that almost 40,000 households in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset are on council house waiting lists. Although some councils could improve their performance by letting properties faster and by evicting squatters, that is not an option in Taunton Deane, because the stock is effectively used at present.

The Audit Commission considers that an average of 74,000 new homes will be needed yearly during the 1990s to meet the demand, but it expects that housing associations and councils will only have enough cash to build 62,000. In expressing concern on the matter, I believe that I can count on the support of a number of my hon. Friends in the south-west, such as my hon. Friends the Members for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning), for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) and for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and, from his earlier remarks, my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter).

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton made the valid point that capital receipts should be transferred to housing associations for use by them. I do not say that councils should continue their traditional role and that they should be responsible for new build. However, I believe that action must be taken to meet the considerable problems and needs that exist in the south-west and across the south generally. If the councils cannot do the job, more must be done to enable the housing associations to do it. In that respect, I welcome the way in which *The Western Morning News* has highlighted the problem raised by the Audit Commission.

I referred to the success of my local authority, Taunton Deane. I referred to the enhancement of the Halcon area of east Taunton through right to buy and through a continuing modernisation and general refurbishment programme on the pre-war estate. However, there is a problem. I am told that the council has been forced to cut the number of dwellings that it planned to complete under the programme during the current year because it is concerned about the high expenditure needed for house renovation grants under the scheme that has been in operation for the past two or three years. Only £742,000 was identified for the specified capital grant for private sector renovation purposes. The housing advice centre in Taunton predicts a renovation grant expenditure in the current financial year of between £1.3 million and £1.5 million. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will address that point, if not in his reply, in subsequent correspondence.

There are other problems in Taunton. There are now 366 households in priority need, an increase from the figure of 307 in 1987-88. However, the resources are effectively used. Despite a considerable demolition programme for non-traditional stock, only 0.84 per cent. of the housing stock was vacant in April 1992. That is a small amount bearing in mind the demands of the demolition programme. Taunton's practice compares well with the practice of the family of local authorities of which it is a member.

The enhancement of the ability of tenants to move is another issue which has a wider application throughout the country. They may move for employment reasons, to join their families or for other social reasons. I am afraid that many of the housing problems in my constituency have been caused by family break-up. There is often a need for mobility in conjunction with other local authorities.

It is suggested that as the economy recovers, job mobility will become a pressing national requirement. It has always been important, but becomes even more so during a recovery. It is said that, at present, it is not given a particularly high priority by designated officers in local authorities. I hope that the Government will do more to encourage local authorities and housing associations to give higher priority to mobility, possibly asking them to set aside a specific proportion of their housing stock for mobility purposes.

As I have said before, mobility should be a right and should be incorporated in the citizens charter. Every tenant should have the right to be told within about three weeks whether he is to be given a nomination for another local authority. He should also be told of his priority category and should have the right to know from the local authority or the housing association in the area to which he wishes to move whether he is likely to be accepted within about three months. It appears that if a tenant is not accepted in three months, he is unlikely ever to be accepted. However, there is a temptation to keep him on the list in the hope that something will turn up.

I hope that more will be done to encourage local authorities to introduce computer facilities for registering tenants for mobility purposes. A recent survey by the housing section of the London School of Economics shows that some local authorities and, indeed, the London boroughs, which have been criticised in many other

respects, make extensive use of computer facilities but that a surprising number do not and express some reluctance to come on line.

I hope that my remarks on mobility, on the general concern about housing provision and the meeting of housing needs, which I have pressed since my maiden speech five years ago and on several occasions since, will be noted by the Minister. I am glad to see that there is increasing interest and support from my hon. Friends in the south-west and elsewhere on those matters. I shall return to them. I congratulate the Minister on his appointment and I hope that he and the Minister for Housing and Planning will address these matters urgently.

1.27 pm

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I am pleased to speak in this debate. The most important right for any person is the right to have decent accommodation that offers security and warmth and in which people can take pride and feel that it is a home. Underlying all the talk about tenants' rights, participation and responsibility is the great need for affordable homes.

Before I turn to the more general theme of the debate, I draw the Minister's attention to the special difficulties of older people. As he probably knows, 45 per cent. of council housing and 56 per cent. of private unfurnished accommodation are occupied by households of one or two people who are aged 60 or over. Age Concern believes that older people have a right to appropriate, high-standard housing which can help them to retain their independence and dignity as members of the community for as long as possible.

I am sure that the Minister has studied Age Concern's charter, its list of recommendations. I urge him to study it again with a view to including it in the citizens charter. The first demand is that people should have the right always to remain council tenants. Age Concern says that any council tenant who wishes the council to remain as his landlord, even though a majority of tenants have voted for a block transfer to another landlord, should be allowed that right. That is especially important for the elderly, who often succumb to worry more easily than other people and who are especially fearful of change. That is quite understandable. If one has lived on the same estate and had the same landlord all one's life, any change can be traumatic. Age Concern is worried about this.

Tenants should have the basic and fundamental right to have essential repairs carried out within a specific period. Council tenant's rights to be consulted about proposals affecting their homes have to be strengthened. The charter should specify the issues on which, and the stages at which, tenants must be consulted and give a time limit for repairs. Age Concern has pointed out that it is important that that consultation is carried out in a user-friendly way that encourages elderly people and any other tenants who may not be confident about giving their views.

Another element of the Age Concern charter is succession rights for carers. Legislation on this must be more sensitive to the situation facing the many thousands of carers who may have given up their own homes, or the chance of having their own homes, to care for a relative in council property. Adequate and appropriate housing play an important part in enabling our older citizens to live full and independent lives. Housing will also be crucial in the proper implementation of care in the community. I draw the Minister's attention to those elements, among many more, of the Age Concern charter.

I shall now examine more specifically tenants' participation and rights. The hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) made a speech which showed an understanding of housing investment. Like him and many other hon. Members on both sides of the House, I feel that it is important to point out the lack of public investment in housing. The visible signs of homelessness are obvious in my constituency, because it includes the bull ring at Waterloo. Many of the people still living in the bull ring are suffering severe mental distress and there is a need for a political initiative for this area alone.

Putting people into hostels does not solve long-term problems. All that happens is a silting up of that accommodation because there is nowhere for people to move on to. Vauxhall also has many invisible homeless people. Thousands of people are on the transfer list because they live in severely overcrowded conditions. Three children sharing a bedroom is common. At my weekly advice surgery I see people to whom, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) said, we can offer absolutely no hope of a move to decent accommodation and a place of their own.

Increasingly, families are turned against families because people believe that others have been given housing ahead of them. This often applies to people in bed and breakfast, the other sector of the invisible homeless. Many with young children in bed-and-breakfast accommodation have to wait many months before they are eventually made an offer. Because of that shortage, even if Lambeth council —which has got a great deal more stick than the borough of Sheffield for the way in which it has dealt with housing —were to fill every single empty property, the problem would not be solved. In the past year, housing administration has improved and the numbers of voids and squatters have reduced enormously. Much has been achieved because of the pressure that has been mounted by tenants and tenants' associations.

Even if every void were filled—many of the properties are in a bad state of disrepair and would require a great deal of money to be spent on them before tenants could move in—there would still be insufficient housing for all the people who are waiting for accommodation. When the Minister examines the bids that will be made for estate strategy money and other initiatives, I urge him not to punish the people of Lambeth and Vauxhall on the basis that he and the Government generally may not like the politicians of those boroughs. I hope that he will give urgent consideration to the large sums that need to be spent on housing estates.

When, as a nation, will we recognise the long-term problems that the housing shortage is causing? There is mental distress, a high cost for the national health service, and truancy from schools. These problems are to be found throughout our society. If people have a decent place in which to live, a home of which they can be proud, I believe that in the long run the costs facing the country generally would be much less. We need a crusade for housing.

There is concern about housing among Members on both sides of the Chamber, but for some reason decent housing has not become a major political objective. It seems that it never reaches the top of the priorities of the Department of the Environment. The fact that it is part of the amorphous grouping of the Department is part of the

[Ms. Kate Hoey]

problem. Housing is so important to those who are inadequately housed that we should have a separate Department of Housing to focus more clearly and effectively on the issue.

I support wholeheartedly tenant involvement and participation in the management of estates, and there have been welcome developments in Lambeth during the past year or 18 months. Many tenants, housing estates and tenant associations are moving along the road to housing management co-ops and other forms of control over estates. Progress was slow at first and no doubt there was some reluctance among local authority staff and politicians to follow the route. That has changed, however, and there have been good steps forward.

There have been some excellent initiatives in Vauxhall. I have in mind Cottington close and Cottons gardens. Things are starting to happen at Penwith Manor, an estate which will be very dependent on the Government in terms of their giving it high priority for estate action money. Stockwell Park estate is the heart of Brixton. Four or five years ago it was known as an estate where no one wanted to stay. Gradually, with the involvement of residents, there has developed a new attitude. Some money has been found to refurbish the worst blocks and to redesign them. A new community spirit is developing on the estate and that augurs well for the future.

I ask the Minister to clarify the Government's policy on housing co-ops. I refer to wholly owned co-ops and not housing management co-ops on housing estates. Where do the Government stand on the funding of the co-op movement? The Housing Corporation has announced that there will be an increase of less than 1 per cent. in the funding of co-ops as part of its overall approved development programme. It is a very small increase, especially when, as we all know, demand for affordable homes far exceeds supply. What is the Minister's attitude to a rational funding system for co-ops, and what will the Government do to ensure money for training for co-op and tenant participation schemes?

In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts), I should like right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House to get away from the sterile debate about tenure—about whether one is a council, housing association or housing co-operative tenant. We must move in the European direction, where the kind of housing one has does not matter. What matters is that people should have a real choice, and they will not have that unless there is an adequate supply of housing. I am pleased at today's opportunity to debate tenant participation, but we should not forget that the most crucial point is that there should be more affordable housing.

1.40 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I am grateful for this opportunity to address the House for the first time as the Member of Parliament for Langbaurgh—particularly in a debate on tenants' rights and participation. Those matters are of great importance to many of my constituents, as I shall explain later.

I am the third Member of Parliament to represent the great constituency of Langbaurgh in the past 10 months. However, I assure the House that I shall make the most earnest endeavours to ensure that right hon. and hon. Members are spared another maiden speech by a Member of Parliament for Langbaurgh for some considerable time to come.

It is appropriate to pay tribute to the tremendous example shown by my two immediate predecessors—Dr. Ashok Kumar and the late Richard Holt. During Dr. Kumar's brief stay in this House, he gained a fine reputation for the methodical and thorough way in which he dealt with constituency queries.

I have been reminded by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House of the way that Dr. Kumar discharged his duties with great courtesy and charm—which are perhaps not the first two objectives that spring to mind when describing the late Richard Holt, who represented Langbaurgh with vigour, determination and unswerving loyalty from 1983 until his untimely death last September.

Richard Holt always said that he would put Langbaurgh on the map, and he most certainly did. He was quick to pounce on anyone who dared to mispronounce the name of his beloved constituency, which is of course pronounced "langbath". He once told one of his great friends, my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick), that he of all people should know the difference between a bar and a bath. Such was his manner.

Thousands of people in my constituency would acknowledge that Richard Holt ruthlessly pursued their problems and obtained solutions, and would never take no for an answer. Above all, Richard Holt was a character, and one who will be sadly missed by us all. If it were possible to create a synthesis of my two immediate predecessors, I would have the perfect example to follow during my tenure as Member of Parliament for Langbaurgh.

At the time of last year's by-election, one newspaper described my constituency as "Little England". I could not offer the House a more pleasing or appropriate description. Langbaurgh has the traditional ironstone mining communities in east Cleveland of Carlin and Howe, and Liverton mines. It has also the prosperous suburbs of Middlesbrough, Marton, and Nunthorpe. It has beautiful coastal beauty to the north, surrounded by Saltburn and the spectacular cliffs at Bouley, and to the south the North Yorkshire national park, whose pleasures many of us so frequently enjoy.

Langbaurgh also embraces the thriving market town of Guisborough. Above all, it is a constituency of contrasts—between the inner city housing estates of Park End and Easterside in Middlesbrough, and the great rural swathes beyond Guisborough and Skelton.

Leon Brittan represented the constituency when it was known as Cleveland and Whitby. On 7 May 1974, he told the House in his maiden speech that many parts of it contained more sheep than people and went on to say—with characteristic wit—that he did not wish to speculate whether, if the franchise were extended to the sheep, his majority would be increased or diminished.

The principal industries served by my constituency are represented by ICI and British Steel. British Steel especially has secured a meteoric rise in its fortunes over the past eight years—one which is worthy of note. Before British Steel was returned to private hands on Teesside, it used to manufacture 1·5 million tonnes of steel per year; it then had 25,000 employees. Today, it manufactures 2·5

million tonnes with 5,000 employees. It has almost doubled its output with one fifth of the previous number of employees.

Because of the huge amount that British Steel has invested in new technology, it is now recognised throughout the world as a leader in the manufacture of quality steel. It is bringing extra investment and jobs to my constituency in the securing of orders such as the Hong Kong harbour bridge, which was successfully completed last month.

Such employment changes bring with them great challenges. During the early 1980s, when painful alterations were taking place, unemployment rose; but it is testimony to the ingenuity, optimism and dynamism of people in my constituency and the surrounding areas of Teesside that unemployment, which in 1987 stood at just over 16·1 per cent., now stands at just over 10 per cent. That is due to the huge expansion of small businesses, encouraged by the Teesside training and enterprise council, the Teesside Development Company and the Northern Development Company, working in partnership to sell the benefits of the marvellous Teesside area to business. They have sold it as a gateway to Europe for the future, benefiting from its port facilities.

Many of my constituents long for a university and I am delighted to learn that—following changes in legislation in one instance and Government funding in the other—Teesside will have not one but two universities by the end of the year. It is very pleasing that Teesside is starting to build a reputation as an academic centre, as well as building on its proud industrial heritage.

We have heard a number of excellent and informative speeches today. As I have said, the subject is very important to my constituency; it must have participated in just about every scheme going. There is the estate action scheme, for instance. In the past three years the amount received by Langbaurgh has doubled and the amount received by Middlesbrough has tripled. There is the right-to-buy scheme; more than 10,000 people in both areas have exercised the right to have a stake in their future. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) was kind enough to mention the estate action boards. They, too, are gaining new dimensions and making new options available to tenants. There is also the city challenge money. Middlesbrough succeeded in gaining that money last year and I hope that Langbaurgh will do so this year. A large proportion of the money has gone into improving housing stock, which is most welcome.

As one who has spent his entire life in the north-east, in and around many of the council estates, I know at first hand about the human misery that is all too often seen on them. I know about the heartache and the despair. It is a tragedy that so often, however well intentioned people are, the very concept of creating great swathes of public housing in our cities has brought about problems. Many of them are now used as social dumping grounds for the non-payers, for problem families, for people who would not fit into other estates in the suburbs. That has led to all sorts of social problems. The opportunities that have been referred to today will, I believe, break down the barriers that have existed for far too long in the inner cities.

This country is unique in terms of the amount of public housing that it provides; 25 per cent. of the housing stock is in municipal hands. In Canada, New Zealand and Australia, however, only 5 per cent. of the housing stock is in municipal hands. When we are lectured, therefore, on the European example, we must bear that fact in mind. We must remember, too, that the private rented sector in west Germany amounts to almost 50 per cent., whereas our private rented sector amounts to only 8 per cent. I am delighted that there will be opportunities to expand our private rented sector.

If there is a challenge for all those who support what has been put forward so eloquently today, it is this: that just to state that people have the right to improve or to repair their homes, or just to state that there is choice for tenants or a tenants charter remains just words, unless those words are heard clearly by the people whom they are designed to help. We must all accept that challenge. We must ensure that the message that there are new rights and responsibilities and that there is an invitation to participate gets across to council tenants so that they can take advantage of it. That is a great challenge, particularly as the messengers who are responsible for carrying the good news are often less-than-sympathetic local authorities.

The changes that are built upon the Housing Act 1980 and the Housing Act 1988 will, I believe, bring to an end the socially engineered inner city council estate as we know it. In future, opportunities will be offered to tenants by councils, housing associations and the private sector. An increasing number of people will take a stake in their future by purchasing their own homes, whether through the right to buy or the rents-to-mortgages schemes. In years to come, this will be seen as making the concept of the power to own and the right to choose a reality in our inner cities, where it is most needed.

1.52 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): It is a great pleasure to follow my new hon. Friend the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates). He paid an elegant tribute in his maiden speech to his predecessor, Ashok Kumar, whose company we enjoyed during a brief sojourn in the House, and to the robust participation of Richard Holt who was with us for rather longer and whose departure, sadly, was very sudden. My hon. Friend's eloquent maiden speech will, I am sure, stand him in excellent stead. We greatly enjoyed his contribution and we shall look forward to his future contributions. Whether we shall get quite right the difference between the "bath" and "bar" of Langbaurgh, I leave for him to judge as his hon. Friends attempt to pronounce the name of his constituency.

There has been a quartet of splendid maiden speeches by my hon. Friends. There have been references to elephants. I am relieved that, unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), I have no elephants in my constituency, so no references to "girths" are necessary.

We heard of the arrival in Colchester of the Danes. I should point out to my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) that he represents part of my family, so I shall watch his Danish connections with great interest. The Romans also came through Battersea, along Stane street, but we had a later invasion by the French Huguenots, which may perhaps give our outlook a slightly different slant.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) has apparently come to us via the Southwark bed bug department—through a trap-door, I think he said.

[Mr. John Bowis]

All four maiden speakers made excellent speeches. We welcome them and look forward to hearing them in future.

We are considering the rights and responsibilities not only of tenants but of landlords and freeholders—those on the other side of the equation. This has been a good debate. We are considering the provision of housing for rent, the upkeep of such housing and the need to ensure that it is in an environment that is tolerable to tenants, and the right to buy, whether for council or housing association tenants. It is right that we should have crossed the boundary between the private and public sectors in the debate.

The Opposition have been quick to point out that resources are crucial to better provision, and that is right. I suggest, however, that it is the proper use of those resources that will ensure that good-quality housing is available to tenants. The Opposition are perhaps a little mean when it comes to the Government's contribution. This year, the Government will spend £7·8 billion on public housing. That is no small amount and is in addition to the £2 billion that is to go to the housing association market.

People who say that housing is disappearing are misleading us in two ways. First, rented housing which moves to owner-occupation does not disappear: those who occupy it merely have different opportunities. Secondly, we must remember that, during the Government's period in office, the number of dwellings has increased by 2 million. When we came to office, there were 17·6 million houses; at the last count, taken earlier this year, there were 19·6 million houses. That increase of 2 million should meet at least some of the extra demand for housing.

The Audit Commission report has been referred to. We need to look carefully at the figures in such reports. It is clear that that report, which referred to the number of dwellings available, overestimated, by a factor of 50 per cent., the number of properties to be demolished and rebuilt by councils. The practice has changed somewhat, and more houses are being refurbished and brought back into use than are being demolished. If one takes into account corrections such as that, the picture looks rather better.

A lot of Government money has gone into refurbishment. My constituency has benefited enormously from the early days of estate action. Some £1 billion has already been spent and this year £1 million a day will be spent on estate action schemes.

Hon. Members have referred to people living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. A further £300 million is to go to provide opportunities for people living in such accommodation to move to permanent housing. That will help some 16,000 families.

Reference has also been made to people living rough —the roofless—and it is right that we should be concerned about them. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) referred to those in Waterloo. I know that, on a number of occasions, Lambeth council has tried to persuade them to move into some sort of accommodation. On one occasion I remember the fires burning because the rough sleepers resisted the delights of being housed by Lambeth. They thought that it was their right to live in that way. Nevertheless, we must examine ways of encouraging such people into hostels and on into permanent accommodation. Again, another £100 million scheme has been introduced this year to help the rough sleepers in London.

Since 1979, some 7 million people have become first-time buyers, 1·5 million of whom benefited from the right-to-buy scheme, so a great deal has been done by the Government and by local government. Too often in debates such as this we seek to blame the other side of the equation for what it has not done instead of looking at our side of the equation, for which we are responsible, to see whether it could provide more opportunities.

There are many empty properties in all sectors, but I ask Opposition Members to examine their Labour local authorities and to do what they can to persuade them to bring back into use the 83,000 council dwellings to which I referred in an intervention, which could provide homes for people in need of housing.

Reducing the number of empty properties is a matter of efficiency. In 1978 when Wandsworth was a Labour borough we had 500 properties vacant long term and 662 vacant short term. At the end of last year in Conservative Wandsworth, the short-term figure had fallen to 248 and the long-term figure had fallen to 26. That is efficient use of resources. That is the result of a drive to put the assets of the community back into use.

There was an argument across the Chamber with the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) about squatted properties. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) corrected him later by pointing out how, as a result of pressure not from the Labour party or the leaders of the council but from tenants, Lambeth was doing something about its squatted properties. Again, that is right. It can be done. In my borough of Wandsworth, no more than nine properties are squatted—yet 800 are squatted across the border in Lambeth and 1,200 are squatted in Hackney. Goodness knows what one would find in Southwark. I suspect that the figure is worse still. One can see how badly the assets are being managed. They need to be brought back into use.

I share the views of some of my colleagues about the homelessness criteria. We need to re-examine them. I am aware that there has been a review, but I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to keep the criteria under constant review to determine whether there are better ways of assessing housing need. Too often I see people in real housing need having to wait behind someone who meets the criteria because there is a baby on the way or whatever. It is a difficult judgment, but we are not necessarily using the right criteria.

I also ask that the problem of refugees coming into London be examined. One of the reasons for our housing problem is that the number of people seeking asylum has increased from 3,000 to 50,000 a year. That is why we are introducing an asylum Bill. Most of the refugees who enter Britain seem to be deemed refugees to London instead of to Britain as a whole. The whole country should help to provide housing for refugees rightly accepted into Britain.

I said earlier that I would refer to 16 and 17-year-olds —the young, single homeless who fall between all the gaps in the woodwork because of the benefit rules. I understand why the benefit rules were changed. It was to ensure that young people did not sit idle, which is not in their interests. We sought to ensure that they took what job opportunities were available and if none was available, went into education or training schemes. But there is a Catch-22. Many young people leave home, for good reasons. They

cannot get onto training schemes unless they are based at a house or dwelling—a permanent address. Of course, they cannot begin to afford that, because they do not qualify for benefit and therefore do not qualify for housing benefit. They cannot begin to afford private sector rents. Will my hon. Friend the Minister consider that carefully with his colleagues at the Department of Social Security?

Will my hon. Friend the Minister also consider the question of deposits? Naturally, many private sector landlords expect a deposit as a form of insurance to protect their property and also rent in advance. Perhaps the Housing Corporation or some other organisation could establish a fund to help people with deposits, which would be repaid to the corporation at the end of the tenancy, as that would help young people.

When considering schemes for housing young people, I hope that we shall not think of hostels. The young people I am talking of are not vulnerable, or they would have been picked up by society, but they could become vulnerable if they are put into the wrong sort of hostel. I should like more schemes to provide houses for between six and eight young people, with someone to oversee, help and advise them, but not a resident warden. We have done this in half-way houses for people leaving care. That would enable young people to become responsible tenants and, we hope, future home owners.

We should look more to the private sector. It is true that a vast number of private sector properties are empty and could be used. So often they are empty because the landlord is worried about the rent laws or about non-payment of rent. Perhaps local authorities could be encouraged to place some of their people in housing need—especially those on housing benefit—in private sector residences. The housing benefit could be paid direct to the landlord, who would be guaranteed an income, and it would help someone into housing—a form of housing where more mobility is possible than in the public sector.

Much has been said about a bigger say for residents, and I welcome that and the Government's new version of the tenants charter. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) asked whether the charter was being pursued down the line. I have here a copy of Wandsworth's housing charter which was published in 1991. I hope that with its information and names and numbers it will be a pattern and that other local authorities are also producing charters. The charter is a good way to help people to participate in running their estates and to give them the same rights as home owners—for example the right to decide when and what quality of work is required, to decide whether they want a new roof or new decoration this year, and whether they only want work done to a certain standard to allow for some landscaping too. If tenants are brought in at the planning stages, much more can be done.

We must also try to plan crime out of our estates. That has not been mentioned. An enormous amount of work can be done, for example, on the ideas of Alice Coleman, among others, by getting rid of walkways and creating gardens around ground floor flats. I shall not dwell on the subject, but tenants can be brought in at the planning stage.

I also ask for action in two other areas: first, on dogs in estates, because I receive many complaints about dogs which should not be living in tower blocks. They frighten people and can cause disease. There should be a registration scheme for dog owners in council properties, with a third-party insurance scheme attached to it, so that only a fit and proper person in a fit and proper house or flat will be permitted to own a dog.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) wishes to speak, but I must also mention noise, which is one of the curses of modern living, with mega-decibels in the night and ghetto blasters in our streets.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State represents Banbury and there is a rhyme about that town. I suspect that its real meaning has never been assessed. I believe that a tenant from Battersea, escaping from the mega-decibels there, rode that cock horse to Banbury, and was extremely cross. Having got there, she complained about the ringing in her ears, which went down to her finger tips, and the ringing of bells, which went down to her toes, saying that she could not escape that wretched music "wherever she goes". My hon. Friend should bear in mind that Banbury cross is the cross that the tenants of Battersea have to bear and that we need some action on noise very swiftly. The issue was not dealt with in the Queen's Speech, but I hope that my hon. Friend will consider it urgently because it is the curse of the modern age.

I concur with my hon. Friends who referred to home ownership, particularly as it relates to those people who have been allocated to housing associations by local authorities. Those people are being denied the right to buy, which is open to every other local authority tenant. I ask the Minister and his colleagues to consider that problem. When the new rents-to-mortgages scheme is introduced, it should cover such tenants as well as other public sector tenants.

2.10 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): We have covered a tremendous amount of ground in the debate, so I shall move from the grand design to a couple of more detailed points.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on the tenants charter with its due attention on the improved rights to repairs. However, it should be pointed out that that charter applies to homes and not to common areas and outside amenities. Tenants' associations can consult and participate, but sometimes they do not have enough bite to get their problems remedied, for example, if the grass needs cutting or litter needs to be collected.

I visited a housing estate in my constituency, Shanklin village, in which the playground was worn down, but, instead of being repaired, it was fenced off and the key was thrown away. That left local parents with no safe place for their children to play. The tenants' association tried to take the matter up with the council, but the problem was not remedied because the council has no legal obligation to remedy defective common areas within a set time limit. Such remedies are put back because of endless bureaucratic procedures and because they are tossed between departments within the council. I suggest that the Minister should take another look at the guidelines issued by the Audit Commission and amend them to ensure that such repairs of common areas are completed within a specified time.

I also wish to consider the tenants' rights of the homeless living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. A year ago, for a television programme, I spent a trial week

[Lady Olga Maitland]

in a hotel for the homeless in Haringey. That hotel was adequate, but many of the others that I visited round the corner were most definitely not. They had poor plumbing, old furniture, damp rooms, inadequate lighting and bathrooms and lavatories that did not function. Bed-and-breakfast tenants have the same right as everyone else, but they are depressed and they are often unable to improve their conditions or complain effectively. As far as I could see, the council authority, Haringey, turned a blind eye to the problem and I almost wondered whether it might even have been colluding with the landlords. There should be much greater vigilance over which hotels are given the plum tenancies of bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

A code of guidance issued to local authorities under section 1 of the Housing Act 1985 called for acceptable standards of accommodation in bed-and-breakfast hotels and insisted on close liaison between the housing and environmental health departments. As we can see, it seems that that code does not work. The Minister should consider appointing independent inspectors to run a monitoring programme to ensure that bed-and-breakfast tenants get a decent deal. They may be poor, homeless and desperate, but they deserve to be treated in a decent and honourable fashion.

2.15 pm

Mr. Murphy: With the permission of the House, I will comment on the debate before the Minister replies. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) extends his apologies for not being in his place for the close of the debate. He had a long-standing engagement. We have listened to four excellent maiden speakers, all of which have been exemplified by fluency, wit, humour and a great deal of expertise on the subjects on which they chose to speak.

The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), whose reputation was known before he arrived here, spoke with great humour and I am sure that he will be among us for a long time. When I was last with the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), in Middlesbrough at the famous by-election some months ago, the weather was very inclement. Today, his tribute to his immediate predecessor was extremely generous and my hon. Friends and I were grateful for that.

The hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) is obviously rooted in his constituency and town. His experience as chairman of Plymouth housing committee will carry much weight as he brings his expertise to bear on future debate on housing and local government matters.

I knew the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) before he entered the House, through a mutual interest in foreign affairs. We welcome him here. He had a distinguished predecessor as the representative of his constituency, but he also had a distinguished father, who I am sure will be delighted to know that his son made his maiden speech on a subject about which his father knew a great deal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) made a sort of second maiden speech. It enabled the House to be aware of his great expertise on housing issues. It was a distinguished speech and we look forward to reading the *Offical Report* of it. His expertise will clearly be of great help in our future deliberations.

It is interesting to note that my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard), for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) and for Greenwich represent constituencies which were all Labour victories at the general election. I am sure that the housing issue and its related problems in their areas contributed to their fine wins.

My hon. Friend the Members for Walthamstow and for Cambridge had distinguished careers in local government, and their knowledge will be of great use to us in the years ahead. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) apologises for not being in his place for the close of the debate. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) made important pleas on behalf of people in housing difficulty in our great cities.

All the hon. Members to whom I have referred, and others, contributed to what has been an extremely useful debate. They pointed out not only the problems that tenants face but the need to extend their rights, and it is clear that those extensions are favoured by hon. Members in all parts of the House, including the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) who spoke on behalf of the Liberal Democrats.

Considerable reference has rightly been made to the report of the Audit Commission and its references to housing and the need for the Government to look at the whole provision of housing. Ultimately, whatever the rents and rights of tenants and whatever future they may have with housing associations, local authorities or in the private sector, it all boils down to whether they have homes. The most significant point to be made time and again in the debate has concerned not only the right of people to buy or rent but for them to have the right to a home at all.

2.18 pm

Mr. Baldry: We have enjoyed an excellent debate which has included four extremely good maiden speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) and for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates).

There has been clear agreement in the House that tenants should have the opportunity of the greatest possible participation and choice. We are agreed that housing is about people and participation, but that it is also about resources. As my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) said, we are devoting considerable resources to social housing, amounting to over £7 billion this year.

We are determined to increase our investment in social housing. We are determined to increase the resources that we make available to affordable social housing. That is why we are increasing the amount available to the Housing Corporation to more than £2 billion in 1993-94, which will enable it to increase substantially the number of units it completes in that year, from 43,000 to 51,000 we anticipate. We are increasing investment because we are determined that every family should have a decent home.

Not surprisingly, there have been comments today about capital receipts and I am sure that we shall continue to have comments about that. As the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) made clear in the general

election campaign, after there had been some confusion in the Labour party about the use of capital receipts, one does not make new resources by changing definitions.

Although it is right that the Government continue to invest resources in social housing, it is also right that we expect local authorities to perform properly and to deliver decently in their role as landlords. The Audit Commission report should be compulsory reading for everyone concerned about housing. However, that report also made it clear that if local authorities deliver efficiently and effectively under their obligations, it would be straightforward to increase, for example, the number of available new lettings by 37,000 over the next two years. They would not need to do anything fantastic. They could achieve that improvement simply by ensuring that standards were brought up to a reasonable level in terms of reducing the number of voids and of reducing illegal occupation.

I found the comments of the hon. Member for Hammersmith slightly depressing in that he seemed to be making up policy on the hoof. We shall all have the opportunity to study *Hansard*. He also seemed to have a particular hostility to the private rented sector. As my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) made clear, we need to encourage the private rented sector. In the previous Parliament, we stopped the long decline in the private rented sector. We brought new landlords into the market and increased choice for tenants as a consequence. We have also increased rights to private tenants—statutory rights. We have strengthened the law against harassment with higher penalties.

I will now comment on four excellent maiden speeches. My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar made a splendid maiden speech. I shall never be able to look at an elephant again without thinking of him. He rightly made clear the aspiration of many to have the right to own. Understandably, he welcomed our rent-to-mortgage proposals. He made clear the watchwords of Conservative policy: quality, diversity, choice, freedom, opportunity and empowerment. He specifically referred to the right to repair and to the right to improve. We will legislate on right to repair to introduce a simpler and stronger right. We intend to introduce a new duty on landlords to pay compensation to tenants who have made improvements to their properties.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton had a speedy selection and a speedy election. Having heard his speech today, I am sure that he will make speedy progress in the House. He is clearly a strong advocate of his constituents' best interests. He made it clear that local authorities have to perform properly as landlords. Local authorities have large housing stocks and many will continue to have such stocks. All have a duty to perform at the standard of the best. My hon. Friend made it clear that in performing at the best, local authorities have a duty in terms of the most efficient housing management. I am glad to be able to tell my hon. Friend and the House that the consultation paper on compulsory competitive tendering will be published shortly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North made a very good maiden speech. He made it clear that he was committed to ensuring that the local authorities in his area fulfilled their role as enablers which is, of course, their proper role. My hon. Friend is clearly committed to working in partnership with all who can help to ensure the best welfare of his constituents. I am sure that he will be an excellent champion of their best interests.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh made a telling and fluent speech. In view of what he said about the number of Members who have represented that constituency in the past 10 months, I am sure that we all hope that he will represent it for many years. He gave an excellent description of his constituency, its opportunities and challenges. I am confident that he will be an excellent champion for Langbaurgh and Teesside. He made clear the real benefits that our housing initiatives such as estate action will bring to his area and gave a graphic description of those initiatives.

I can tell my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) that we intend to make the rents-to-mortgages scheme available to all tenants who presently have the right to buy. That will include secure tenants of non-charitable housing associations. We intend to consult the new landlords of tenants who have opted for large-scale voluntary transfer about the possibility of making the rents-to-mortgages scheme available, because that might affect the basis upon which private finance for the transfer was raised.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor will want to consult as soon as possible on the housing court. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling may rest assured that we intend to continue to target resources at some of the worst run-down estates. We shall do that by initiatives such as estate action and city challenge. In reply to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey), we shall judge every city challenge application on its merits.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling spoke about the tenants charter. We have been impressed by the quality of some local authority charters, such as that from Wandsworth about which my right hon. Friend spoke. Over the next two or three months I hope to visit many local authorities, and one of the issues that I shall discuss is the information that they give to tenants in their tenants charters.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) also spoke in the debate. It is rather inelegant to talk about retread speeches, but clearly this is a subject about which he knows a great deal. I have no doubt that he will continue to make worthwhile contributions to housing debates for some time. He poured too much scorn on tenants choice, which is an excellent example of a policy which gives tenants the opportunity to initiate action. The scheme gives most council tenants the right to choose a new landlord for their existing homes. The landlord might be a housing association, a tenant-controlled group or a commercial organisation. Two tenants choice transfers have taken place in Westminster and Merton and, following successful ballots, there have been five more formal applications to start the statutory transfer process. I hope to see more transfers in the near future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) rightly said that the debate was not simply about local authority performance but also about the performance of housing associations. For that reason, we shall closely watch how the Housing Corporation monitors its strategy for tenant participation. My hon. Friend spoke about the waiting list. It is interesting to note that the Audit Commission report states:

"The waiting list is a very inaccurate measure of needs."

My hon. Friend also spoke about what local authorities and others could do by diverting demand. The Audit Commission report contains a long list of actions that

[Mr. Baldry]

local authorities could take to divert demand by sensible schemes such as housing advice, staying-put schemes and cash incentive schemes. That must be seen as part of the total picture.

The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) will, I hope, excuse me if I draw his specific comments on housing in Wales to the Minister who has responsibility for housing in the Principality. I am sure that he will respond robustly in writing.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) mentioned the Walthamstow housing action trust. The tenants in Walthamstow whom I have met have expressed considerably greater enthusiasm for HATs than did the hon. Gentleman, but it is our clear intention that HAT tenants will be able to return to local authorities as landlords, if they wish, when work on their properties is complete.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) entertained the House to a long treatise on——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Points of Order

2.30 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At 11 o'clock this morning, when the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) was in the Chair, a number of London Members—of whom I was one—raised an issue that is important to us in London. Although we were then ruled out of order, a request was made that, as there were then still three-and-a-half hours of parliamentary time left in today's sitting, the Government Whip on duty should report the deep concern of the London Members on the issue, with the request that a Minister make a statement at 2.30. It appears that no statement is to be made, which is deeply regretted by London Members. One hopes that, by Monday, the usual channels will have arranged for, if not the Secretary of State, a senior Minister from the Department of Health to be here to make a statement on the issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I am sure that those on the Government Front bench will have heard the hon. Gentleman.

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it a new point of order?

Ms. Jowell: It is a new point of order. There is great concern among my constituents about media reports of possible further cuts at King's College hospital. I hope that it will be possible——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair has no control over cuts. The hon. Lady has a number of opportunities to raise such matters, but that does not include through the Chair at 2.30 on a Friday.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS (JOINT COMMITTEE)

Ordered,

That Mr. Richard Alexander, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Peter Butler, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Edward Garnier, Mr. William Ross and Mr. Patrick Thompson be members of the Select Committee appointed to join with a Committee of the Lords as the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. William Cash, Mr. Hugh Dykes, Mr. Derek Enright, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Dr. Norman A. Godman, Mr. David Harris, Mr. Alan Haselhurst, Mr. Robert Hicks, Mr. Jimmy Hood, Mr. David Knox, Mrs. Jacqui Lait, Mr. David Madel, Mr. Tony Marlow, Mr. Nigel Spearing and Mr. Jimmy Wray be membes of the Select Committee on European Legislation. —*[Mr. MacKay.]*

EUROPEAN STANDING COMMITTEES

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 7857/91, relating to the permissible sound level and exhaust system of motor vehicles, 8051/91, relating to the application of rules of competition, agreements and concerted practices in the air transport sector, 8090/91, relating to an Agreement between the European Economic Community, Norway and Sweden on civil aviation, and 8207/91, relating to completion of the civil aviation policy in the European Communities towards single market conditions, may be proceeded with as if they had been recommended by the Select Committee on

European Legislation for further consideration under the provisions of Standing Order No. 102 (European Standing Committees), and referred to European Standing Committee A.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Ordered,

That Mr. David Young be discharged from the Public Accounts Commission and that Sir Thomas Arnold, Mr. Denzil Davies and Dr. Keith Hampson be added to the Commission.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

King's Lynn Fishing Fleet

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

2.32 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): This Adjournment debate is about the King's Lynn fishing fleet. It is no exaggeration to say that it faces a crisis. At this time of the year, the main catch is the brown shrimp, and the price for brown shrimp has collapsed catastrophically. The other day some fishermen told me that, whereas a year ago, a kilo of brown shrimp fetched £3·26, last month it was fetching 65p. I went to a meeting of the local fishermen and one explained to me in detail the impact of this. A year ago, a fisherman in a medium-sized vessel was bringing back gross roughly £1,000 worth of brown shrimps. Two weeks ago, he was bringing back approximately £150 worth. It simply is not worth their while going out to fish for brown shrimps.

The problem has been brought about largely through flooding of the market in Holland, the main outlet for brown shrimps, as a result of excessive fishing by, to some extent, the Danish vessels but by other continental vessels as well in their inshore fisheries. The vessels fishing in the inshore waters of the continent were previously fishing in the North sea for white fish and in other high seas fisheries that have been greatly depleted and in some places closed. The vessels have been redeployed and they are fishing inshore. As a result, the brown shrimp market has been flooded and the price has collapsed.

I am not asking the Government to try to rig the market; I am not asking for intervention on that scale. However, I feel that there must be a mechanism to enable EC Fisheries Ministers to get together to create a structure that will ensure that the level of fishing will be restricted when there has been an excessive amount of fishing of one stock and the market has been flooded. That could probably be ensured by a voluntary ban. The Fisheries Ministers should have some form of early-warning system so that they can anticipate such problems, which can have devastating consequences for local fisheries. It should be put in place over the next few months so that we can, I hope, prevent a similar problem from arising in future. There should be a mechanism that allows the Ministers to act in unison.

There are many fishermen at King's Lynn who would normally be able to redeploy themselves elsewhere, but it so happens that the cockle fishery, which in previous years has been successful, is partly closed. There has been a voluntary ban and the fishing is restricted to three days. That prevents redeployment to that stock.

In many instances the lives of the fishermen will be devastated. Many of them have borrowed heavily. Many have mortgages and many have taken out loans for their vessels. Their situation is grim indeed. I have heard of many fishermen who will have their homes and boats repossessed. I know that there cannot be any immediate solution to their plight, but I hope that we can learn a lesson from what has happened. I look to my hon. Friend the Minister to take a lead in Europe to ensure that the lesson can be learnt and that an appropriate mechanism can be put in place that will enable Ministers to take action when their experts and their own intelligence tells them that a serious problem is building up.

[Mr. Henry Bellingham]

Why is it that the main outlet for brown shrimps that are caught in the Wash and in places such as Morecambe bay is Holland? Why is it that there are no significant outlets in this country? Why is it that the brown shrimp has not been better marketed as a British product? It is of high quality and it could be attractive to many consumers. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that in future the Sea Fish Industry Authority places much greater emphasis on the Wash shell fishery, and especially on the marketing of the brown shrimp.

Why is it that the Sea Fish Industry Authority, which is a Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food quango, has not devoted sufficient energy to undertaking research into the brown shrimp? There must be many potential outlets throughout the country. Why is it that the main outlet is the continent? One reason is that the Lynn fishermen have locked themselves into contracts with several wholesalers who are supplying the Dutch market. That obviously puts the fishermen in a vulnerable position. I should like the Sea Fish Industry Authority, with the encouragement of my hon. Friend the Minister, to examine carefully whether the Ministry can usefully engage in market intelligence and research so that we can increase the number of outlets for the brown shrimp.

The local fishermen have told me that quite a few of the owners of vessels that were previously fishing for white fish have taken up miscellaneous species licences. That licence enables vessels to fish in inshore waters for crabs and shrimps, which are vulnerable and special.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister of State to consider carefully the introduction of a specific, dedicated licensing system covering crabs and shrimps. That would make a good deal of sense. Many vessels that previously operated in the white fish areas of the North sea and in other high seas have a miscellaneous species licence and are fishing inshore. A new licensing scheme for shrimps and crabs —which would, incidentally, be welcomed by the crab fishermen of Cromer, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell)— would send a signal that the Government really cared. That would be important to improving morale in these difficult times.

I am aware that Lynn fishermen have not sufficiently spoken with one voice in the past. Fishermen are by nature extremely independent. The Lynn fishing fleet comprises 127 vessels and many families there have been involved in the industry for generations. It is an important part of Lynn's tradition and is a significant employer. It also creates many jobs in ancillary industries.

Fishing is more than just a part of our heritage and tradition. It is also a crucial part of our local economy. However, to get Lynn fishermen to speak with one voice has always been difficult. I welcome the establishment recently of a fishermen's informal co-operative, which can represent the community in meetings with myself or with our Member of the European Parliament, Paul Howell. In fact, my hon. Friend the Minister met members of that co-operative when he visited my constituency last year, and they were able to tell him of their concerns.

We must move one stage further and think in terms of establishing a producers' organisation. That would cost money and require a degree of commitment by the fishermen that has not been seen before. That might be difficult to achieve in the current climate, because a producers' organisation is set up under statute and entails a levy on the fishermen concerned. However, the fish stocks in question would be subject to a withdrawal system, and the result could be a form of the intervention buying that occurs when the price of a commodity completely collapses.

I do not suggest that a producers' association would have solved the problems that currently confront Lynn fishermen, but it might have made them less severe; some good might have come out of it. Above all, Lynn fishermen would have been able to speak with one voice and to get across their message more effectively.

What can the Department do to help Lynn fishermen to establish a producers' organisation, if that is what they want? As their Member of Parliament, I shall be urging them to do just that.

Some fishermen in my constituency are facing a personal crisis. They risk losing their homes, businesses and vessels. They cannot redeploy to another fishery and many are heavily in debt. Some can tough it out because they have not borrowed too heavily, have other business interests or have some financial fat on the bone. Others, through no fault of their own, are the victims of circumstance and will have to leave the industry.

Rather than be hounded out of their homes and having their boats repossessed, they could leave the industry with dignity if they were eligible for a decommissioning grant. On Monday, the House will debate the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill, which I wholeheartedly welcome. One of its strands is enabling legislation to establish a decommissioning scheme. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on securing £25 million from the Treasury for the purpose, but I urge him to consider extending the scheme to inshore fisheries.

The scheme will be restricted to vessels of not less than 10 m in length, which would cover roughly half those in King's Lynn fleet. It seems likely that the scheme will be confined to high-seas fisheries, but I urge my hon. Friend to consider extending it to places such as the Wash so that at least some Lynn fishermen could leave the industry with dignity.

That would, of course, be a last resort. Those who leave the industry do so for good, in many cases departing from a family tradition going back for many generations. The move would not meet with a great deal of support from many fishermen, but some, at least, could make use of it.

A strategy must be worked out for the long-term management of the Wash shell fishery, which is a tremendous asset. As I have said, many jobs depend on it; it is part of a thriving local economy. In the past, however, our policy has been too hit-and-miss. There has not been enough planning or direction and, in many respects, there has not been enough research.

I am particularly concerned about the mussel fishery. It is one of the main winter fisheries, especially for men operating "lays"—marine allotments—but there has been no significant spatfall since 1986. As a result, there has been no recruitment to stocks since that date and the landings of mussels at King's Lynn have been seriously depleted. In 1989, 3,500 tonnes, valued at £450,000, were landed; in 1991, the figure was 800 tonnes.

We need more research into this phenomenon. I believe that the lack of recruitment is due to natural causes, but it is just one example of the crucial need for an overall study of the Wash to assess its potential, analyse its problems,

examine the marketing and all forms of research into each of the fish stocks in question and—above all—give the fishermen some direction. At present they are very demoralised.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to give careful consideration to whether his Department can take a lead so that at least we can have some blueprint. A study could be commissioned, perhaps not by his Department but by some other agency, to consider every aspect of the Wash shell fishery, go through all the problems and, in particular, show fishermen the way forward. That might give them some hope at a time when their morale is at rock bottom and enable them to plan for the future.

My hon. Friend has been extremely helpful. He has been down to King's Lynn and he has always said that his door is ajar for the Lynn fishermen and me to go through and meet him. I should, however, be very grateful if a comprehensive study of the Wash could be carried out to assess the problems.

I look forward to hearing what my hon. Friend has to say. Let me again put on record my deep gratitude for the interest that he has taken.

2.47 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): I recall with pleasure my visit to King's Lynn in July last year—particularly my visit to Mr. Williamson's factory and the seminar organised by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), where I met many of the King's Lynn fishermen. I remember that the discussions that we had then covered decommissioning and the relaying of the mussel beds, and I shall have more to say about that shortly.

I recognise the difficulties experienced by the King's Lynn fishermen, who have been faced with a considerable drop in the price of shrimps—although I believe that there has been a slight recovery in the price of the smaller sizes in the past couple of weeks. It is a very real problem. It is especially difficult for fishermen who have invested heavily in new boats and equipment to supply Dutch buyers for the continental market, and who must get reasonable returns from the market in order to service loans.

In this case, the underlying problem—perhaps exceptionally—is not the depletion of stocks. Rather, it is the fact that the market is considerably over-supplied. That has occurred mainly because of a significant increase in fishing for this species by Danish fishing fleets. There also seems to have been some fall-off in continental demand for the brown shrimp. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is a pity that the United Kingdom consumer has no particularly liking for this small, sweet-tasting fish.

My officials have spoken to the Sea Fish Industry Authority about the difficulties of marketing. The authority would be pleased to discuss with the fishermen ways in which it might be able to advise or co-operate in the development of techniques. Representatives of the fishing industry sit on the authority and are able to draw attention to the matter; but we have done so in any case, so that point has been noted. It was an extremely sensible one.

It is essentially a marketing problem. We hope that the situation will improve somewhat when the Danish boats turn their attention to other species. I understand the wish of the fishermen to co-operate in order to do whatever is possible to limit the effects of the downward pressures on price. My hon. Friend mentioned the idea of forming a producers' organisation. The Community's rules on the marketing of fishery products provide for groups of fishermen to form themselves voluntarily into producers' organisations which, if they have the formal recognition of the Government, have certain powers and responsibilities towards their members.

Certain criteria have to be met. It may help if I spell them out. The basic requirements are that the organisation must be formed on the producers' own initiative; that membership is confined to producers and must be voluntary; that the organisation must have a written constitution and be a viable legal entity within the terms of the Companies Acts or the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts. Finally, they must have "sufficient economic activity", which broadly means meeting certain annual landing figures, depending on the species. It seems likely that Lynn fishermen could meet these requirements, but we should have to look at it carefully. We have available a detailed note about setting up a producers' organisation and I have arranged for a copy to be sent to my hon. Friend.

One of the responsibilities of a producers' organisation is the obligation to introduce common production and marketing rules, with the aim of providing product quality and—of particular significance to the Lynn fishermen—adapting the volume of supply to market requirements.

Among the powers exercisable by a producers' organisation is the ability to set an autonomous withdrawal price, which means that the producers' organisation can pre-determine a price which, if it is not met at auction sale, leads to the withdrawal of fish from sale and to compensation for the fishermen. The fact that that compensation is paid for by a levy on sales imposed by the producers' organisation means that the levies collected when prices are good help the fishermen when prices are poor.

It is possible, instead, for a producers' organisation to apply a Community-agreed withdrawal price. Prices are set annually for a number of species. In this case, the producers' organisation can be compensated from Community funds, but, in the jargon of the Community, these withdrawal arrangements are "degressive". That means that as more fish are withdrawn from the market the withdrawal price decreases. This is a very sensible arrangement which is designed to prevent fishing simply for intervention purposes. It is a pity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it does not apply to more of the agricultural regimes.

The Community withdrawal scheme is intended to help fishermen in cases where there is a sudden and substantial drop in price and provides relief over a relatively short period. To set up a producer organisation would take time and would not, as my hon. Friend recognises, provide instant relief for the King's Lynn fishermen. However, it might be a way for local fishermen to exercise greater control in future over the market. My officials will be pleased to meet fishermen's representatives for further discussions, if they wish to pursue the matter. My hon. Friend said that my door is ajar. My door is usually open. It is fully open to fishermen, because I realise the difficult circumstances that they face.

My hon. Friend also mentioned our newly announced arrangements for decommissioning. As he knows, we are at present consulting the industry on the details of a

[Mr. David Curry]

package to reduce fishing effort and to conserve fish stocks. One of the elements in the package is a decommissioning scheme. The precise eligibility requirements have not yet been finalised and are subject to consultation with the industry. Nevertheless, it is clear that there will not be scope to include vessels of 10 m and under because the amount of money available for decommissioning is limited. The scheme will aim to take out vessels which represent best value for money in terms of the fishing effort removed from the fleet.

Community rules also mean that we would attract no Community reimbursement for the smaller vessels. I note, however, that rather more than half of the fishing vessels normally based in the Wash are over 10 m in length and it is possible, therefore, that some of them would be eligible to apply for decommissioning grants. We must, however, design the scheme to get the best value for money and take out those boats that represent the heaviest effort against the most vulnerable fisheries.

My hon. Friend asked about the possibility of separate licences for crabs and for shrimps. I am afraid that I really do not think that that is a runner. The problem is one of marketing and there is no reason for using the licensing system, which is primarily for conservation purposes, in the current situation.

As my hon. Friend said, a further possibility might be to improve the local fishery for other species, such as mussels, and I understand that the fishermen are looking at the chances of improving the depleted mussel supplies, possibly by finding offshore beds that could supply young shellfish for growing on. My hon. Friend mentioned the new Wash fishery order which is designed to give local interests powers to safeguard future stocks, and we are working with the Eastern sea fisheries joint committee to introduce the order in the summer. My hon. Friend also referred to a research study on the Wash and I want to stress that Ministry scientists at our fisheries laboratory at Lowestoft are already helping the Eastern sea fisheries joint committee in that project. Only yesterday they were able to supply the committee with two different types of dredgers for use in the search for offshore mussel beds and for the recovery of young brood stock for relaying in the Wash.

Another possibility would be to explore opportunities for fresh markets, although I recognise that contractual arrangements with Dutch buyers may not make that easy. I have already mentioned to my hon. Friend the fact that the United Kingdom Association of Frozen Food Producers might be able to put the fishermen in touch with other markets and I am sure that the Shellfish Association of Great Britain would also be as helpful as it is possible to be in these difficult circumstances.

I understand the problems currently faced by the Wash fishermen. Curing the problems must ultimately depend on co-operation between the various fishermen who supply the continental markets and their buyers, to bring supply into better balance with demand. But we can certainly help with advice on setting up producer organisations and in the ways that I have tried to outline.

I know that my hon. Friend is assiduous in bringing to our attention the problems that his constituents face, and I fully recognise their gravity. I give him my absolute assurance that we shall do our utmost to be of assistance where we have the means to do so. I look forward to the next occasion on which I can visit my hon. Friend's constituency and meet those fishermen.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 18 May 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Stipendiary Magistrates

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many provincial stipendiary magistrates were in office on 1 December 1970, 1980, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1992 respectively; and if he will give the names of the courts outside London which now have full-time stipendiaries assigned to them.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of stipendiary magistrates in post on 1 December was:

	Number
1970 1980	11
1985	13
1986 1987 1988	14
1991	26

The courts outside inner London which have full-time stipendiaries based at them are:
Birmingham ((3)
Bradford
Brent
Cardiff
Cheshire
Doncaster
Feltham
Hendon
Kingston upon Hull
Leeds (2)
Liverpool
Manchester (2)
Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare
Nottingham (2)
Pontypridd
Portsmouth
Rotherham
Salford
Sheffield
Stoke on Trent
Wolverhampton

Judges

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) how many full-time women judges there are currently on the Wales and Chester circuit; how many there were at the end of each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many full-time women judges there are currently on *(a)* the northern circuit and *(b)* the north-eastern circuit; how many there were at the end of each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many full-time women judges there are currently on *(a)* the south-eastern circuit and *(b)* the midland and Oxford circuit; how many there were at the end of each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement;

(4) how many full-time circuit judges there are currently on *(a)* the northern circuit and *(b)* the north-eastern circuit; how many there were at the end of each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement;

(5) how many full-time circuit judges there are currently on *(a)* the south-eastern circuit and *(b)* the midland and Oxford circuit; how many there were at the end of each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement;

(6) how many full-time circuit judges there are currently on *(a)* the western circuit and *(b)* the Wales and Chester circuit; how many there were at the end of each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total numbers of circuit judges, and the numbers of female circuit judges, on each circuit at the beginning of each of the last five calendar years and as at 1 May are set out in the table. The Lord Chancellor appoints to each judicial post the candidate who appears to him to be best qualified to fill it regardless of sex or other factors. He has repeatedly made clear his wish to appoint more women to judicial office. The composition of the bench at any one time is, however, dependent on the composition of the legal profession in the age groups from which appointments are made.

Circuit/Date		*1 January 1988*	*1 January 1989*	*1 January 1990*	*1 January 1991*	*1 January 1992*	*1 May 1992*
Midland and Oxford	Female	—	—	1	1	1	1
	Total	55	59	62	63	62	65
Northern	Female	4	4	4	4	6	5
	Total	54	55	55	56	58	57
North-Eastern	Female	3	3	2	2	2	2
	Total	41	45	45	45	45	47
South-Eastern	Female	7	7	7	10	10	10
	Total	187	188	198	200	224	232
Wales and Chester	Female	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Total	22	22	24	25	27	27
Western	Female	2	2	2	2	2	3
	Total	34	35	37	38	41	41

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans the Lord Chancellor has in relation to each magistrates court on the Wales and Chester circuit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My noble and learned Friend will continue to encourage each magistrates court in England and Wales to provide an efficient and high-quality system of local justice. Under the Justices of the Peace Act 1979, it is for magistrates courts committees, in consultation with the relevant local authorities, to identify the best use of courthouse accommodation in their areas. The proposals set out in the White Paper "A New Framework for Local Justice"—Cm 1829—will strengthen their ability to carry out this responsibility.

Crown Courts

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will give the location and tier of each Crown court on the Wales and Chester circuit, and when it started to try indictable criminal cases whether as Crown court or assizes/quarter sessions; what plans the Lord Chancellor has in relation to each; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The location and tier of Crown court centres on the Wales and Chester circuit are as follows:

(a) *First Tier Centres*
Caernarfon, Cardiff, Chester, Mold, Swansea.
(b) *Second Tier Centres*
Carmarthen, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport (Gwent), Welshpool.
(c) *Third Tier Centres*
Dolgellau, Haverfordwest, Knutsford, Warrington.

The jurisdiction to try indictable offences was transferred to the Crown court sitting at these locations following the implementation of the Courts Act 1971 on 1 January 1972, save for Warrington where jurisdiction was conferred in July 1977. To research the dates when jurisdiction to try indictable criminal cases was conferred at the above locations at assize or quarter sessions would involve disproportionate cost.

The Lord Chancellor, through his senior management, constantly reviews the operational needs of the circuits in relation to both criminal and civil business. There are no changes planned in relation to utilisation of the court centres listed above save for the major refurbishment work currently under way at the Crown court centre at Chester, and similar work planned for the Cardiff and Caernarfon court centres.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Customs and Excise

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to compensate Customs and Excise staff who will lose their jobs as a direct result of the ending of customs controls between members of the European Community on 1 January 1993.

Sir John Cope: The implementation of the single market in January 1993 means that routine physical controls on intra-EC freight traffic at the frontier will cease, and be replaced by audit-based checks at importers' offices inland. Customs and Excise hopes to find other jobs within the Department for the great majority of staff affected by the changes. If some redundancies are necessary for non-mobile staff, they will be entitled to compensation payments under section 10 of the principal civil service pension scheme.

Civil Service

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons over the age of 60 years have been newly employed by the civil service since August 1990.

Mr. Dorrell: About 330 people aged 60 and over were recruited to the non-industrial home civil service between 1990 and December 1991, inclusive.

Rent-a-Room Scheme

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the cost to the Exchequer in terms of revenue forgone in a full year of the rent-a-room scheme outlined in the Conservative party manifesto under which home owners will be able to let rooms to lodgers without liability to tax on the rent they receive.

Mr. Dorrell: The Exchequer cost of any rent-a-room scheme would depend on the scope and details of the particular scheme.

Civil Service Relocation

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil service posts have been relocated from the south-east of England to elsewhere in the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: Around 29,000. Of these nearly 6,000 were moved between 1979 and 1987 as part of the centrally directed programme and a similar number are estimated to have been moved at Departments' own initiative. Under the delegated approach which has operated since March 1988 a further 17,000 civil service posts have been located or relocated outside the south-east.

Tax Repayments

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will call for a report on the availability of forms for claiming repayment of tax on bank or building society interest.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue tells me that repayment claim forms are available from the 24 new offices set up to handle repayment claims work. Requests for claim forms can also be made to local tax offices which will forward these to the new offices. Claim forms are issued by post, normally within a few days of the request.

Civil List

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a breakdown of the amounts paid to Her Majesty's civil list for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* In accordance with the Civil List (Increase of Financial Provision) Order 1990—SI 1990/2018—Her Majesty the Queen receives £7·9 million each calendar year for her civil list.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has held with civil service unions about museum and gallery opening hours.

Mr. Key: None.

Monuments

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the monuments which have been raised at public expense in *(a)* London and *(b)* elsewhere in the United Kingdom to General de Gaulle or the Free French Forces.

Mr. Mellor: There are no such monuments whose cost has been met by central Government.

Export Reviewing Committee

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on his conclusions regarding the recent report by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 14 May 1992]:* I am considering the report and hope to make a statement shortly.

Bohemian Wood Carvings

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the result of his predecessor's meeting with the consultative group on the export of works of art after 1992 in relation to the problems of Bohemian wood carvings stolen from ecclesiastical buildings in Czechoslovakia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* Following the then Minister for the Arts' meeting with the consultative group, a letter was sent to the art trade organisations and to the auction houses requesting their co-operation should any items be offered for sale which would appear to have come from a church in Czechoslovakia. In response to a request from a member of the art trade, my office has since asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to obtain details from the Government of Czechoslovakia of any particular items which might have been stolen in order to assist in identification. A response is awaited.

PRIME MINISTER

Roman Catholic Church

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government to accord the same degree of official recognition to the territorial sees and titles of the Roman Catholic Church in England and in Wales as is accorded to the unestablished Anglican churches outside England; and if he will make a statement on the situation in Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: Official recognition for Roman Catholic territorial titles was precluded under Acts of 1829 and 1851, the penal provisions of which were repealed in 1871 and 1978. Since it was raised with me by Sir Hugh Rossi in the last Parliament I have been looking sympathetically at the matter and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will now be consulting the relevant Church authorities about the practices to be adopted in future.

Lockerbie Bombing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the outcome of initiatives taken by the Security Council of the United Nations in relation to Lockerbie and Libya.

The Prime Minister: The United Nations Secretary-General has tried to persuade Libya to comply with United Nations Security Council resolutions 731 and 748, including sending emissaries several times to Libya. Libya has rebutted these efforts and has not complied with the resolutions.

Maastricht Treaty

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister why the new article 123 inserted by the Maastricht treaty which provides for the salaries of the President and members of the EC Commission to be determined by majority vote, was inserted under title IV, which relates to amendments to the treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Authority; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Article I(7) of the treaty on European union reproduces the provisions of article 6 of the treaty establishing a single Council and single Commission of the European Commission of the European Communities—the "merger treaty"—signed on 8 April 1965—see schedule 1.I(5) to the European Communities Act 1972—and incorporates them into the text of the European Atomic Energy Committee treaty. Identical provisions are to be found in articles G(47), amending the European Coal and Steel Community treaty. This is a matter of textual consolidation only; the legal position will remain as it has been since the entry into force of the merger treaty.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister whether he regards the principle of subsidiarity as applicable in any way to the relationship between London and Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government are fully committed to the Union between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, while recognising the need for arrangements which reflect the distinctive interests of its component parts.

UNCED

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he intends to be present at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development for its final two days in June.

The Prime Minister: I propose to attend the latter part of the Rio conference. I am currently finalising the details of my programme which will be announced shortly.

G7 Summit

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals on environment protection Her Majesty's Government plan to put forward at the G7 summit of leading industrialised nations in Munich in July.

The Prime Minister: We will propose that the G7 should take effective follow-up action to the Earth summit, including in the area of environmental protection.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Wolds Private Prison

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoner custody officers have either resigned or been sacked, since the opening of the Wolds private prison on 6 April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* cell fires, *(b)* attempted suicides and *(c)* assaults on staff have taken place at the Wolds private prison since it opened in April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Parliamentary Constituencies

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the Parliamentary Boundary Commission's initial proposals for Essex to be published.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the Boundary Commission for England has not yet decided when it will publish its provisional recommendations for the county of Essex, although it is likely that this will be towards the end of the review.

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many constituencies would be created by the Boundary Commission if the present average number of electors in Scottish constituencies was applied to the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This would depend on decisions taken by the boundary commissions when reviewing individual constituency boundaries. However, the approximate numbers, based on figures derived from the 1992 register of electors, are given in the table.

Country	*Electorate*	*Quota*	*Number of seats*
England	36,435,874	54,571	668
Wales	2,218,551	54,571	41
Scotland	3,929,112	54,571	72
Northern Ireland	1,141,466	54,571	21

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Members there would be representing each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the basis of an average constituency throughout the United Kingdom of *(a)* 65,000 voters, *(b)* 70,000 voters and *(c)* 75,000 voters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This would depend on decisions taken by the boundary commissions when reviewing individual constituency boundaries. However, the approximate numbers, based on figures derived from the 1992 register of electors, are given in the table.

Country	*Electorate*	*Quota*	*Number of seats*
(a)			
England	36,435,874	65,000	561
Wales	2,218,551	65,000	34
Scotland	3,929,112	65,000	60
Northern Ireland	1,141,466	65,000	18
(b)			
England	36,435,874	70,000	521
Wales	2,218,551	70,000	32
Scotland	3,929,112	70,000	56
Northern Ireland	1,141,466	70,000	16
(c)			
England	36,435,874	75,000	486
Wales	2,218,551	75,000	30
Scotland	3,929,112	75,000	52
Northern Ireland	1,141,466	75,000	15

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the Boundary Commission to report its recommendations on parliamentary representation in Suffolk; and what account he expects to be taken of the possible ending of county boundaries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the Boundary Commission for England has not yet decided when it will publish its provisional recommendations for Suffolk, although it is likely to be towards the middle part of the review. The commission will continue to take account of alterations to county boundaries.

Police Officers (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women from ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom who resigned from the Metropolitan police in each of the last five years; and what had been the average length of service.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is shown in the table:

Year	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Average length of service Years*
1987	20	3	23	3·6
1988	9	3	12	4·0
1989	16	7	23	2·5
1990	11	2	13	4·9
1991	9	5	14	1·7

Police Cells

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost to public funds for the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available of keeping prisoners in police cells.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In the financial year 1991-92, a total of £94·7 million was paid to police forces for holding prisoners who should have been accommodated in Prison Service establishments.

Private Security Industry

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for the regulation of the private security industry.

Mr. Jack: I refer my hon. and learned Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 19 December 1991, at columns *247-48*.

Death Penalty

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all categories of offence which still carry the death penalty.

Mr. Jack: The death penalty is still available for the following categories of offence:

(i) treason
(ii) piracy with violence
(iii) offences under the Armed Forces Act 1971 such as surrendering or abandoning a place or thing to the enemy and various offences with intent to assist the enemy.

Animal Testing

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to encourage organisations currently using live animals to move to humane medical testing techniques; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The controls of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 already require that before any project licence is granted, the applicant must show that he or she has considered the possiblity of using alternatives not involving living animals for any of the procedures. The strict controls of the Act also require that laboratory animals are properly cared for and that suffering is minimised. The use of living animals in biomedical research has been declining for many years and the Act has given further impetus to this encouraging trend.

In addition, the Home Office funds research into ways of reducing, refining or replacing the use of living animals in scientific procedures.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will undertake a review of legislation controlling the use of live animals in testing non-medical products and procedures in United Kingdom laboratories.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The system of controls established by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 on the use of living animals in research for whatever purpose is working well. The effectiveness of the controls is kept under constant review, both by the Home Office and its inspectorate, and the independent statutory Animal Procedures Committee.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the number of experiments licensed by the Home Office on live animals over the last five years listed under the purpose for which the experiment was conducted.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Project licences issued by the Home Office authorise whole programmes of research which may involve a number of procedures carried out experimental purposes. The numbers of project licences granted by the Home Office are included in the annual reports of the Animal Procedures Committee. The number and purposes of individual procedures started each year can be found in the annual publication "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals: Great Britain". Copies of these publications are in the Library of the House.

Derek Bentley

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make an announcement or decision on his study of the report submitted to his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the case of Derek Bentley.

Mr. Jack: This report is receiving careful consideration. I shall decide as soon as possible on whether any action on my part is appropriate in this case.

Immigration

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state his policy towards the financing of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government are not satisfied with the way in which UKIAS' executive committee and general council oversee the service and have been pressing for changes to bring it in line with the standards expected of an organisation which receives grant in aid. In January 1992 my hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd) told UKIAS that its refugee unit was to be transferred to a new body and that it had three months in which to introduce reforms to the remainder of the organisation if it were to continue receiving Government grant. The necessary changes have not been made and the Government are now considering the future arrangements for funding advice and representation for people with rights of appeal under immigration legislation.

Football (Sweden)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress the Government have made in their negotiations with Sweden on corresponding offences under the Football Spectators Act 1989.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I am pleased to confirm that the Football Spectators (Corresponding Offences in Sweden) Order 1992 comes into force today. This has the effect of enabling the courts in England and Wales to impose restriction orders in respect of football-related convictions in Sweden.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what figures are available on the number of homeless people who voted in the last general election; what changes will be made to the provisions that exist for homeless people to register; and what guidelines are given to electoral registration officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:*

Information on the number of homeless people who voted in the general election is not held centrally. The courts have held that a person who has established his residence in a particular place with a substantial degree of permanence is entitled to be registered as an elector. In these circumstances, we have no plans to change the current provisions for the registration of electors; and no guidance has been issued to electoral registration officers on registering homeless people.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Universal Suffrage

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy at future international gatherings to promote universal suffrage.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom takes every opportunity to promote the principles of democracy, including the right to vote at periodic elections, on the basis of universal and equal suffrage, and will continue to do so in all appropriate fora.

Ethiopia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the improvement of human rights in Ethiopia since the fall of the Mengistu Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Human rights have improved since the fall of Mengistu. Freedom of expression has largely been restored and there is a commitment, enshrined in the July 1991 charter, to hold regional and national elections. Not surprisingly after an extended civil war, there remains great concern. We continue to discuss with Ethiopian authorities their internal security systems, instances of disfranchisement and delays in strengthening the judicial system.

Middle East (Arms)

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to restrict the level of arms sales in the middle east.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are playing an active role in discussions of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council about restraining the level of arms exports to the middle east. The five have agreed guidelines governing such exports, and will be discussing mechanisms for confidential consultations at their next meeting in Washington on 28 and 29 May.

Malawi

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what official representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the Malawian Government about the increased human rights abuses perpetrated by the authorities in Malawi; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Together with EC partners, we have made four démarches to the Malawi Government in recent months. Our démarches addressed both individual cases and Malawi's human rights record in general.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of political prisoners about which Her Majesty's Government had made representations over the last two years to the Government of Malawi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have on numerous occasions made representations on behalf of all political prisoners and detainees in Malawi both bilaterally and together with our EC partners. We have also raised the cases of the following individuals: Orton and Vera Chirwa, Dr. Jack Mapanje, Smon Mhane and Chakufwa Chihana. Dr. Mapanje and Mr. Mhane have since been released.

Guatemala

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with the Guatemalan authorities the case of Father Ventura Lux; and if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on violations of human rights in Guatemala.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are trying to find out more about the case of Father Ventura Lux. We have raised our concerns about human rights with the Guatemalan authorities on a number of occasions. We believe President Serrano is seeking to improve matters. But, in the circumstances of Guatemala, he faces a difficult task. We will continue to press for improvements.

Instruments of Torture

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to promote more activity within the United Nations to restrict trade in instruments of torture.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom supports the work of the UN special rapporteur on torture and encourages states to accede to the UN convention against torture, and to respect its provisions. Universal acceptance of the convention would remove all trade in instruments of torture.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are taken to investigate human rights records of countries that seek to buy instruments of torture.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We oppose torture anywhere and monitor the human rights records of countries thought to practice it. We take seriously any allegations of equipment being exported from the United Kingdom intended for use in torture.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is taken in United Kingdom embassies and consulates around the world to monitor human rights abuses by regimes who may be involved in the trade of instruments of torture within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All United Kingdom diplomatic posts monitor and report on the human rights situation in the countries to which they are accredited.

Overseas Governors

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the proposed budget for the inauguration ceremony of *(a)* the new Hong Kong governor and *(b)* the new Bermudan governor.

Mr. Goodlad: The costs of the inauguration ceremonies will be borne by *(a)* the Hong Kong Government and *(b)* the Government of Bermuda.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the rules for ceremonial dress of governors, high commissioners and ambassadors serving overseas were drawn up; and when they were last revised.

Mr. Goodlad: The rules for ceremonial dress are based on custom and practice which predate the creation of the diplomatic service in 1964. The last review of the need for uniform was conducted in 1969 when all heads of mission were consulted about local protocol requirements.

Since then, the wearing of uniform has been considered on a case-by-case basis taking account of the views of the outgoing incumbent of the post.

Governor of Bermuda

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the total cost of equipping the new governor of Bermuda; and what items of ceremonial dress are involved.

Mr. Goodlad: A total of £7,200. The items involved are a full dress tropical uniform, and a full dress blue uniform, to include plumes, button, hat, gloves, shoes and sword.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what official vehicles are provided for the governors of Hong Kong and Bermuda.

Mr. Goodlad: These are the responsibilities of the Hong Kong Government and the Government of Bermuda. All costs are borne by the respective Governments.

Queen (European Visits)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the European Community countries to which no official visit has been made by Her Majesty the Queen; what approaches have been received from these countries concerning such a visit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty the Queen has not made official visits to either Greece or the Republic of Ireland. I am not aware of approaches from either country for visits by Her Majesty.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those articles of the treaty of Rome that are subject to amendment by the Maastricht treaty, setting out the original article alongside the amended article and providing an explanation in each case as to the meaning and effect of the amendment.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Title II of the Maastricht treaty on European union contains those provisions of the treaty which amend the treaty of Rome. Those articles amending the treaty of Rome are described as "replacing" existing articles. A number of new articles are required to be "inserted" into the existing treaty. Some existing articles are to be repealed.

The implications of the treaty have been discussed at length in parliamentary debates before and after the Maastricht European Council. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs submitted a detailed analysis to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee for its report on "Europe after Maastricht". A similar memorandum from Her Majesty's Treasury was submitted to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's inquiry into economic and monetary union. These have been published by HMSO.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Magistrates

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Attorney-General what was the number of days worked by provincial stipendiary magistrates in 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply.

The number of days worked by provincial stipendiary magistrates was approximately 5,000. Precise figures are not maintained centrally. On 31 December 1991 there were 26 provincial stipendiaries in post, of whom eight were appointed during that year.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Immunisation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much is currently being allocated by the Overseas Development Administration for immunisation programmes for children; and if he will make it his policy to support the goal of complete immunisation of children by the year 2000.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ODA spent some £61 million on bilateral health sector assistance in 1990, the latest year for which figures are available. These figures do not identify expenditure specifically on immunisation programmes.

We continue to support the immunisation goals contained in the plan of action of the 1990 world summit for children. Our 1992 annual grant to UNICEF, which funds immunisation and other programmes, is the highest ever at £9·5 million.

Environmental Management

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much is currently being invested by the Overseas Development Administration to improve the institutional and regulatory framework for environmental management in third world countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ODA attaches importance to the strengthening of the institutional and regulatory framework for environmental management in developing countries. For example, the ODA is funding a study, costing approximately £230,000, of the air pollution

problems in Mexico City to assist the Government of Mexico to introduce regulatory mechanisms to control such pollution. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will write to the hon. Member giving further examples of our activities.

Environment and Health Aid

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is currently being given by the Overseas Development Administration to assist the process of monitoring the state of the environment and public health in third world countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ODA has been involved in a number of projects which assist developing countries to monitor the state of their environment. For example, we are working in Ghana and Nigeria to establish the local environment protection council and the federal environmental protection agency respectively, to implement their national environmental protection plans. We have also undertaken studies to summarise information on the state of the environment in a number of developing countries, and have conducted country studies on global environmental issues like climate change and ozone depletion.

Our health sector assistance concentrates on strengthening the management and delivery of basic health services, to meet priority health needs. The global monitoring of public health levels in developing countries is concentrated within the World Health Organisation and other United Nations agencies, to which we are major contributors.

We also fund the training in the United Kingdom of developing country nationals in, for example, environmental pollution control, waste management and epidemilogy.

Ethiopia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with representatives of the Ethiopian Government regarding the application of good government criteria for British aid to Ethiopia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Good government is essential for sustainable development. We have made it clear to the Ethiopian Government that future aid programme levels will be influenced, as elsewhere, by considerations of good government and human rights.

Good government is also important in its own right and is part of our regular dialogue with the Ethiopian authorities. For example, the British chargé d'affaires, with EC colleagues, presented an EC démarche of 27 March pressing for peaceful political dialogue and supporting the process of democratisation.

Malawi

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what attempts are being made by Her Majesty's Government to co-ordinate an international aid freeze on support going into Malawi until human rights abuses are ended and investigated.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are in close touch with our European Community partners and other donors, among whom our concern about human rights in Malawi is widely shared. Last week's consultative group meeting for Malawi, held under World bank auspices in Paris, clearly demonstrated the determination of donors to limit new commitments of aid, other than humanitarian assistance in response to the current drought, pending tangible and continuing improvement of the Malawi Government's performance in this area.

Malaysia

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had on forestry with the Government of Malaysia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development held discussions on 15 May with a delegation led by the Malaysian Minister of Primary Industries, Dr. Lim Keng Yaik. The two Ministers signed a memorandum of understanding on co-operation for the conservation, management and development of forest resources, copies of which has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

EDUCATION

Hearnville School, Balham

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will agree to meet a deputation of parents and staff from Hearnville school, Balham, before he considers the application by Wandsworth council to close the school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Member's constituents have already taken the opportunity to make their views known in the usual way by lodging statutory objections to the closure proposal, and by voting for the school to apply for grant-maintained status. My right hon. Friend will of course take all representations into account when he considers the proposals.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the pupil-teacher ratios upon which education policy is based.

Mr. Forth: The allocation of resources, including teachers, is a matter for local management decision. The Government do not, therefore, set policy objectives for pupil-teacher ratios—PTRs. However, when determining its own education policies it takes account of the most recent data on PTRs as reported by schools and local education authorities. The latest PTR is for 1991 at 17·2:1 overall for maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools.

School Funding

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidelines are given to schools as distinct from local education authorities on what proportions of their budgets should be held back for contingencies; and how a school's spending record determines future funding allocations.

Mr. Forth: The Department has not issued any such guidelines. Responsibility for the management of a school's budget rests with the governing body and decisions of this sort will need to be taken in the light of the particular circumstances of the schools concerned.

A school's spending record should only determine future funding allocations in that any underspend will be added to, and any overspend will be deducted from, the school's budget share for the following financial year.

National Councils

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to broaden the remit and input of the School Examinations and Assessment Council and the National Curriculum Council; what consideration he is giving to merging them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The functions of the two councils are laid down by section 14 of the Education Reform Act 1988 and their current priorities are set out in their corporate plans. My right hon. Friend is currently considering their future relationship.

WALES

Inmos

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what meetings have taken place between his Department, the Welsh Development Agency, Inmos and its parent company SGS-Thomson concerning the proposed relocation of the company.

Mr. David Hunt: Several.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total amount in receipts received by the Welsh Development Agency in 1991-92; and how much of this total was capital receipts.

Mr. David Hunt: Total receipts for 1991-92 were £69·7 million, of which £33·3 million were capital receipts.

Disabled Facilities

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list for each district social services area in Wales the number of households awaiting a call to consider the need for handicapped aids and adaptations; and what is the average period before a call is made.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Opencast Coal

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many opencast coal applications are *(a)* outstanding and *(b)* imminent in Alyn and Deeside; if he will list the locations in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Applications for planning permission for opencast coal mining are the responsibility of Clwyd county council as minerals planning authority. The information requested is not held centrally but one proposal in Alyn and Deeside, for opencast mining at Bannel Bridge, south of Buckley, is currently before me on appeal.

Appointments

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the names of appointments that are presently in office that he has made, giving the period for which the appointment was made and any relevant qualifications of the appointees.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* The table lists those public appointments made since my replies of 12 December and 19 December 1991, *Official Report*, column *534-39* and *272-82* respectively.

Name	*Current appointment ends*
PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS	
CARDIFF BAY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION	
Deputy Chairman:	
Councillor Lord Brooks of Tremorfa	6 May 1993
Members:	
Mrs. Honor Chapman, CBE	2 April 1995
Councillor Paddy Kitson	6 May 1993
Professor Richard Silverman	2 April 1995
Mr. James Beveridge	2 April 1995
WELSH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY	
Member:	
Mr. E. Glyn Davies	31 March 1995
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES	
Member:	
Mr. Brian Thomas	4 November 1995
DEVELOPMENT BOARD FOR RURAL WALES	
Chairman:	
Mr. E. Glyn Davies	31 March 1995
Members:	
Mr. Robert Gee	24 April 1995
Councillor Veronica Hollis	24 April 1995
Mr. Jeffrey Morgan	24 April 1995
Mr. Hywell Roberts	24 April 1995
Councillor E. J. K. Shaw	24 April 1995
Councillor Roger Williams	24 April 1995
Mrs. Christine Lewis	24 April 1995
WALES TOURIST BOARD	
Member:	
Mr. E. Glyn Davies	31 March 1995
SPORTS COUNCIL FOR WALES	
Member:	
Mr. D. R. Turner	31 March 1993
FAMILY HEALTH SERVICE AUTHORITIES	
DYFED	
Non-Executive Member:	
Mrs. Brenda L. Davies	30 November 1992
POWYS	
Non-Executive Member:	
Mrs. Patricia A. Antill	31 March 1994
DISTRICT HEALTH AUTHORITIES	
PEMBROKESHIRE	
Chairman:	
Capitain Henry W. Phillips	31 July 1992
Non-Executive Member:	
Mr. Gerald Henry Monte	31 October 1992
WEST GLAMORGAN	
Chairman:	
Mr. P. D. Allen, CBE	31 July 1992
STANDING NURSING AND MIDWIFERY ADVISORY COMMITTEE	
Mr. M. J. Vince	31 March 1996

Name	Current appointment ends
Health Promotion Authority for Wales	
Chairman:	
Mr. J. I. Davies	31 March 1996
Non-Executive Member:	
Mrs. C. E. Lewis	31 March 1993
Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting	
Mr. G. Boulton	14 September 1993
Professor B. Davies	14 September 1993
Dr. D. Harrett	14 September 1993
Mr. D. C. Jones-Davies	14 September 1993
Mrs. D. A. Keddie	14 September 1993
Mrs. A. V. Males	14 September 1993
Mrs. S. B. Nuttall	14 September 1993
Mrs. T. J. Parry	14 September 1993
Mr. N. S. Towns	14 September 1993
Mrs. B. Wise	14 September 1993
National Library of Wales	
Council	
Mr. Roy Luff	17 July 1994
Library and Information Services Council	
Chairman:	
Mr. W. Gwyn Williams	30 September 1994
Cardiff Institute of Higher Education: Higher Education Corporation	
Members:	
Mr. Tom Morgan	31 March 1995
Ms. Sarah Dawson	31 March 1995
Historic Buildings Council for Wales	
Chairman:	
Mr. Thomas Lloyd	30 April 1995
Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board	
Member:	
Mr. M. J. Reilly	31 December 1994
Brecon Beacons National Park	
Members:	
The Hon. Mrs. E. S. J. Legge Bourke	31 March 1995
Dr. C. S. Briggs	31 March 1995
Dr. D. Jones	31 March 1995
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Committee	
Members:	
Mr. C. Parry	31 March 1995
Mr. W. Evans	31 March 1995
Snowdonia National Park Committee	
Members:	
Mr. J. Dale	31 March 1995
Mr. R. Collister	31 March 1993
Intervention Board Executive Agency[1]	
Member:	
Mr. O. Rees, CB	22 February 1995
Meat and Livestock Commission[1]	
Member:	
Mr. R. E. M. Rees, CBE	1 April 1995

[1] Bodies for which the Secretary of State makes some or all appointments jointly with other Ministers.

Name	Current appointment ends
Hill Farming Advisory Committee for England, Wales and Northern Ireland	
Deputy Chairman:	
Mr. Alun Evans, OBE	14 February 1995
Members:	
Mr. P. Cornelius	14 February 1995
Mr. Charles Armstrong	14 February 1995
Mr. Henry Bainbridge	14 February 1995
Mr. John Dowson	14 February 1995
Mrs. A. Cowan	14 February 1995
Mrs. J. Gilman	14 February 1995
Mrs. G. Jones	14 February 1995
Mr. Edmund Morphet	14 February 1995
Mr. Thomas Roskilly, BSc, PhD	14 February 1995
Mr. John Sayer	14 February 1995
Mr. John Tamplin	14 February 1995
Mrs. R. Mudge	14 February 1995
Mr. Campbell Tweed	14 February 1995
Mr. J. Vaughan	14 February 1995
Sub-Committee for Wales of the Hill Farming Advisory Committee for England, Wales and Northern Ireland	
Chairman:	
Mr. Alun Evans, OBE	14 February 1995
Members:	
Mr. H. Bainbridge	14 February 1995
Mr. R. Howells	14 February 1995
Mrs. G. Jones	14 February 1995
Mr. C. Lewis	14 February 1995
Mr. W. Lloyd	14 February 1995
Mr. J. Price	14 February 1995
Mr. C. Pugh	14 February 1995
Mr. John Tamplin, OBE	14 February 1995
Mr. J. Vaughan	14 February 1995
Rent Assessment Panel for Wales	
Lay Members:	
Miss M. Evans	31 December 1992
County Councillor C. Lewis, JP	31 December 1992
Mrs. D. E. H. Roberts	31 December 1992
Committee on Agricultural Valuation in Wales	
Member:	
Mr. G. T. Williams, JP, FSVA, FAAV	28 February 1993
Agricultural Wages Committee and Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committee	
Clwyd	
Member:	
Mr. I. G. Richards, BSc, Eng, MICE	31 December 1993
Dyfed	
Chairperson:	
Mrs. E. D. Williams	31 December 1993
Members:	
Mr. G. Davies	31 December 1993
Mrs. E. Jenkins	31 December 1993
Gwent	
Chairperson:	
Mr. J. L. Evans	31 December 1993
Member:	
Mrs. J. M. Williams	31 December 1993
Gwynedd	
Member:	
Mr. R. R. Harris	31 December 1993
Powys	
Member:	
Mrs. L. A. Davies	31 December 1993
Forestry Commission Reference/ Committee Panel (Wales)	

Name	Current appointment ends
Members:	
Mr. P. L. Marriott	30 November 1993
Mr. R. A. Smart, BSc, FICFOR	30 November 1993
Mr. C. H. W. Griffith	30 November 1993
Mr. W. B. Walker, FICFOR	30 November 1993
URBAN INVESTMENT GRANT APPRAISAL PANEL	
Members:	
Mr. R. James	31 May 1995
Mr. K. Doolan	31 May 1995
ANCIENT MONUMENTS BOARD FOR WALES	
Chairman:	
Professor Glanmor Williams	31 March 1995
WALES YOUTH AGENCY	
Chairman:	
Mr. Gerald Davies	31 March 1995
Vice-Chairman:	
Dr. Howard Williamson	31 March 1995
HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR WALES	
Chairman:	
Sir Idris Pearce	5 May 1995
Members:	
Professor Sir John Cadogan	5 May 1995
Mr. Alan Cox	5 May 1995
Professor Sir Sam Edwards	5 May 1995
Mr. Michael Griffith	5 May 1995
Professor Richard Griffiths	5 May 1995
Sir Philip Jones	5 May 1995
Mr. Alfred Morris	5 May 1995
Dr. Brynley Roberts	5 May 1995
Dr. Ann Robinson	5 May 1995
FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR WALES	
Chairman:	
Mr. Malcolm Wallace	5 May 1995
LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES	
Chairman:	
Lady Crawshay, CBE, JP, DL	30 September 1992
Deputy Chairman:	
Mr. R. Hall Williams	30 September 1992
Member:	
Mr. R. K. Lacey	30 September 1992

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to announce the next renewables order as part of the non-fossil fuel obligation in England and Wales.

Mr. Eggar: I have this under review.

British Coal

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to employ as accountancy or auditing firms, in relation to the privatisation of British Coal, only such firms as have not been subject to criticism in reports from his Department's inspectors.

Mr. Eggar: When making such appointments my Department makes such inquiries as are necessary to establish the professional competence of the firm concerned and takes all relevant considerations into account.

Euratom Safeguards

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received a copy of the report on the operation of Euratom safeguards, SEC (92)80 final, from the European Commission; and what contribution the former Department of Energy made to the report.

Mr. Eggar: The second "Report on the Operation of Euratom Safeguards", EC 4496/92,—SEC(92)80—was received by my officials on 11 February 1992.

No information has been sought from my Department specifically in connection with this report. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House.

Renewable Energy Advisory Group

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he plans to publish the report of the Renewable Energy Advisory Group established last August by the former Minister of State at the Department of Energy.

Mr. Eggar: Future arrangements for the renewable energy advisory group are currently being considered.

Decommissioning Costs

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the most recent estimated cost to public funds of decommissioning *(a)* the Magnox reprocessing plants B204 and B205, respectively, and *(b)* the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: Responsibility for assessing the costs of decommissioning the B204, B205 and THORP plants at Sellafield is a matter for the operator, British Nuclear Fuels plc. To the extent that Government programmes have benefited from the operation of the plants, the Government will contribute an appropriate share towards the costs of decommissioning.

Export Controls

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what steps he proposes to take to constrain further United Kingdom trade in instruments of torture; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he is considering seeking additional legal powers to assist in the process of disclosure in the transfer of all repressive technology equipment and training from the United Kingdom to the rest of the world.

Mr. Needham: I have no plans at present to amend export controls for these purposes. When realistic and enforceable controls are identified as necessary, I will act as quickly as possible to impose them. Amnesty International recently sent my predecessor a report on this matter and he provided a full reply to all its recommendations.

Debt

Mr. Battle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to amend the Insolvency Act 1986 and the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 to ensure

that debts due by virtue of schedule 4, paragraph 2 of the Social Security Act 1990 be regarded as a preferential debt or a preferred debt, respectively.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no plans to amend the Insolvency Act 1986. Responsibility for amending the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 rests with the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of British businesses' response to the demands of environmental audit requirements being developed in proposals for European Community legislation.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 13 May 1992]:* The Government have received a number of comments from business about the European Community's proposed "eco-audit" regulation as the proposals have developed. The Government welcome the scheme and will continue to consult to ensure that it will meet the needs of British business.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Welfare

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether a list of priorities has been settled in respect of the items in the veterinary sector that are to be considered by the EC Council of Agriculture Ministers during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community; and if he will make a statement as to what priority has been accorded to animal welfare measures.

Mr. Soames: In the veterinary sector the United Kingdom presidency will be giving priority to measures necessary for the completion of the single market and for the improvement of animal welfare. The specific measures to be considered by the Council will depend on the availability of proposals from the Commission and on the progress made under the Portuguese presidency.

Rabies

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of rabies were reported in *(a)* France and *(b)* other EC countries in 1991; and in which regions they occurred.

Mr. Soames: EC member states reported the following rabies cases in 1991:

Country	*Cases*
France	2,166
Belgium	29
Germany	3,599
Italy	4
Luxembourg	16
Netherlands	12
Spain	[1]8
Denmark	—
Greece	—
Portugal	—
United Kingdom	—

[1] In North Africa.

The disease is present mainly in north-east France, eastern Germany, and at Community border areas with neighbouring third countries.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many organisations have approached his Department in connection with the proposed EC legislation on rabies prevention; and if he will list them.

Mr. Soames: The Ministry has been approached recently by the following organisations on the general topic of rabies controls:

Quarantine Kennel Owners Association;
RSPCA;
British Veterinary Association;
National Office of Animal Health;
Dunwich Womens Association;
Rushmere St. Andrews Womens Institute;
Nacton Womens Institute;
Kelsale Womens Institute;
Thanet Dog Owners Association;
The Sled-Dog Sports Federation;
Hull and Goole Port Health Authority;
North West Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club;
Eastern Counties Golden Retriever Club;
Masters of Foxhounds Association;
National Farmers Union;
Farm and Food Society;
Falmouth and District Hotels Association;
Healing Parish Council;
National Equine Defence League;
Feline Advisory Bureau;
Walmer Residents Association;
Bournemouth Residents and Visitors Association of Dog Owners.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which countries in western Europe and eastern Europe have had the highest incidence of rabies cases in animals over the past five years; and what information he has on the methods used in those countries to try to prevent the spread of the disease.

Mr. Soames: In Europe rabies is mainly associated with the red fox. The highest incidences of disease in western Europe are found in Germany, Austria and France. In eastern Europe the disease is generally widespread with the highest incidences recorded in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

Oral vaccination of foxes is the chief method for controlling the spread of rabies in both the Community and neighbouring countries.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the position in the single market regarding the elimination of quarantine regulations for animals moving into rabies-free countries.

Mr. Soames: No proposal has yet been made for the elimination of quarantine.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which EC countries enforce compulsory vaccination of dogs.

Mr. Soames: Vaccination of dogs is understood to be a legal requirement in Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain. It is also required elsewhere in the Community in specific areas.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further measures he proposes to take to ensure that United Kingdom farming is not disadvantaged by the non-implementation of the common agricultural policy and other regulations in other member states.

Mr. Curry: The European Commission is responsible for ensuring that the common agricultural policy is implemented properly in all member states. We are always ready to draw to the Commission's attention any failures by other member states to implement the CAP.

Farming (Profitability)

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further measures he proposes to take to promote profitability in United Kingdom farming.

Mr. Curry: I refer my hon. Friend to the policy statement "Our Farming Future", copies of which were placed in the House Libraries last autumn.

Viral Haemorrhagic Disease

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he proposes to make viral haemorrhagic disease in rabbits notifiable; how many outbreaks have been confirmed in domestic rabbits; whether any wild rabbits have been confirmed as suffering from the disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Viral haemorrhagic disease in rabbits was made notifiable on 1 June 1991. Two outbreaks have been confirmed in domestic show rabbits and none in any wild rabbits.

Eggs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will change the labelling requirements for eggs to ensure that imported eggs are not labelled as British; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: No such change is necessary. It is already an offence under the Egg Marketing Standards Regulations to label eggs as British when they are not.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will carry out a survey of eggs sold in the United Kingdom to ascertain their quality and freshness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My egg marketing inspectorate enforces the quality standards laid down in the EC Egg Marketing Regulations in England and Wales at packer and wholesale level. The Agriculture Departments in Scotland and Northern Ireland have similar responsibilities: Trading standards departments of local authorities are responsible for retail sales.

Dr. David Clarke: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce measures to ensure that batches of eggs which have been imported are not released for distribution until the results of salmonella testing are known; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: As was made clear to the hon. Gentleman on 8 March 1990, at column *987*, and 27 July, at column *561*, such a step would be a clear breach of European Community law.

Sunlight (Exposure)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice his Ministry has given to farmers and farmworkers about reducing their exposure to the sun's rays.

Mr. Gummer: Current public health advice on minimising exposure to strong sunlight is set out in the Health Education Authority leaflet "Are you Dying to get a Suntan", copies of which were distributed to pharmacies by the pharmacy health care scheme in July 1991.

Salmonella

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the up-to-date position on each of the 17 measures he has taken to control salmonella in poultry to which he referred to in his answer of 3 March 1989, *Official Report*, column *375*; whether any measures have been withdrawn; whether any new measures or other initiatives have been introduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: All the measures to control salmonella in poultry listed in the answer of 3 March 1989, *Official Report*, column *375*, were implemented in full.

The details of the salmonella control measures have been kept under review. New arrangements for slaughter and heat processing of flocks which the Ministry requires to be slaughtered and trials for antibiotic treatment of pullet laying flocks were introduced in March 1990. Less onerous testing and registration requirements for small flocks of breeding birds were introduced in November 1990. The automatic slaughter of laying flocks of domestic fowl infected with salmonella typhimurium was discontinued in January 1991. Arrangements for owners of infected flocks to send eggs for pasteurisation as an option to compulsory slaughter were announced in October 1991.

Booklets on food safety in the home have been published as well as the production of a video and two information packs for schools.

The measures introduced to control salmonella in eggs and poultry are necessary to ensure the continued protection to public health. I will continue to keep the measures under close review in the light of changing circumstances and developing scientific knowledge and will continue to press for harmonised salmonella controls to be applied throughout the European Community.

BSE

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those species of mammals to which attempts have been made to transfer bovine spongiform encephalopathy which have so far been unsuccessful.

Mr. Soames: Experimental transmission of BSE has been attempted to the following species of mammal:

Mice, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs marmosets, hamsters and mink.

Of these, hamsters and mink have not succumbed to a spongiform encephalopathy. The mink experiment is incomplete.

Meat and Livestock Commission

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the total Government funding received by the Meat and Livestock Commission for each of the last five years.

Mr. Curry: Direct Government funding of the Meat and Livestock Commission—MLC—is confined to payments of the salaries, travel and subsistence and related expenses of Commissioners. Figures for the past five years are as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	0·2
1988-89	0·2
1989-90	0·2
1990-91	0·2
1991-92	0·2

In addition, the MLC provides services for Government on a customer/supplier basis for which payments over the past five years were as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	12·8
1988-89	13·6
1989-90	13·3
1990-91	10·8
1991-92	15·3

Coastal Defences

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to respond urgently to the National Audit Office report "Coastal Defences in Britain", and the Environment Select Committee report "Coastal Zone Planning"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department is giving careful consideration to the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on coastal defences in England. Officials are likely to be called to give evidence to the Public Accounts Committee after which the Government will respond to any report published by that Committee.

A separate Government response is being prepared on the report on coastal zone protection and planning by the House's Environment Select Committee.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total difference in current prices between *(a)* the cumulative cost of the single pension paid to an individual since April 1979 to date, and *(b)* the cumulative cost of the single pension paid had the link between the rise in earnings and the rise in the pension been sustained; and what are the comparable figures for the married couples pensions.

Miss Widdecombe: The cumulative difference in cost had pensions been uprated by the higher of earnings or prices from April 1980 to date would be £7,690 million.

This would cost a man on average earnings and his employer an extra £11·20 per week between them in national insurance contributions.

Notes:

1. There are no "single" or "married couple" rates of Retirement Pension. The standard pension is calculated on the basis of individual contribution records or, in the case of some married women, on the basis of their husbands' contributions. Adult dependency additions may be awarded where the wife of a pensioner is under pension age. Thus it would be misleading to break down the total cost of all categories of pension into "single" or "married" rates.
2. The link between the rise in earnings and the rise in the pension was ended in 1980, not 1979. Cost differences have therefore been shown from this date.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* schemes and *(b)* individuals are currently in receipt of the guaranteed minimum pension; and if he will list the reason in the case of each scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 20 February, at columns *279-80*. Analysis of the numbers of individuals involved and the reason in each case is not available.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the successor body to the independent living fund will be enabled to provide assistance to new applicants in addition to existing recipients; if he will specify any difference in the eligibility criteria for each group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Government are committed to maintaining a fund which supports the most severely disabled people after April 1993. Details of the arrangements will be announced in due course.

Maxwell Pension Schemes

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *46*, when regulations will be laid to enact paragraph 2 of schedule 4 to the Social Security Act 1990 to require that, when a pension scheme is wound up, any excess of liabilities over assets is to be treated as a debt on the employer.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the then hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) on 19 December at column *288*.

Pension Funds (Fraud)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward legislation to protect the position of pensioners where occupational pension funds have been the victim of fraud; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: We are committed to reviewing the framework of law and regulation within which occupational pensions operate. We are considering the form the review should take and intend to make an announcement soon.

Water Bills

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what allowance for water bills is included in the calculation of individual income support.

Miss Widdecombe: There is no separate allowance for water rates in income support. Water is one of the many items of expenditure which vary. The general movement of prices is reflected in the uprating index applied to income support and the other income-related benefits.

From this April the uprating index used for the income-related benefits has been modified to include water rates, certain miscellaneous costs and, for 1992-93, 20 per cent. of the community charge.

TRANSPORT

Thames Bridges

13. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many railway bridges across the tidal section of the River Thames there are; how many of these incorporate pedestrian crossings; and what authority is responsible for these.

Mr. Norris: Three railway bridges across the Thames incorporate pedestrian crossings. Whilst the bridges are the responsibility of British Rail, any pedestrian crossing is the responsibility of the appropriate riparian highway authority.

BR Rolling Stock

14. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that, when granting approval for new rolling stock for British Rail, he will insist on no more than four abreast seating on routes principally serving passengers travelling 40 miles or more.

Mr. Freeman: No. It would not be right to impose an arbitrary restriction of this kind. Each case must be treated on its merits.

Horse Riders (Headgear)

15. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the Horses (Protective Headgear for Young Riders) Act 1990 to be brought into force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I intend to make the Horses (Protective Headgear for Young Riders) Regulations this month so that they will come into effect before 1 July 1992.

Heathrow Airport

16. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action the Government intend to take further to reduce aircraft noise nuisance around Heathrow airport.

Mr. Norris: Between 1974 and 1989 there was a 70 per cent. reduction in the number of people living around Heathrow who are exposed to aircraft noise likely to cause annoyance. The phase-out of older, noisier aircraft over the next decade will bring further significant improvements. The United Kingdom has played a leading role in securing international agreement to this.

Severn Bridge (Tolls)

17. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to take powers to enable him to reduce toll charges on the Severn bridge.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We have no plans to seek any powers in relation to the bridge beyond those contained in the Severn Bridges Act 1992.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in 1992 about *(a)* toll increases on the Severn bridge and *(b)* interruptions to travel across the bridge; on how many days since 1 January travel has been (i) wholly prevented and (ii) impeded by repairs or weather conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My Department has received this year some 40 letters about the toll increases provided for in the Severn Bridges Act 1992. We have had a smaller number of letters about delays on the bridge.

The bridge has not been closed to traffic at any time this year. High winds have caused operating restrictions on five days. Delays to traffic in excess of 10 minutes due to strengthening and resurfacing work have occurred on five days.

The Severn bridge provides substantial benefits to users and to the Welsh economy. The early provision by the private sector of a second crossing will reinforce those benefits. I know that Severn River Crossing plc attaches much importance to minimising delays at the existing bridge.

Southend (Train Service)

18. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make an official visit to Southend on Sea by train on the Fenchurch Street line to assess its standard of service.

Mr. Freeman: I am pleased to see that the service provided on the Fenchurch Street line has improved substantially in recent months and that the line has exceeded its passengers charter standard for punctuality by a considerable margin. I hope to take an early opportunity to use the line to visit Southend.

Jubilee Line

19. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the future of the extension of the Jubilee line.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier in response to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

26. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the future of the Jubilee line extention into London docklands.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave earlier in response to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

Traffic Calming

20. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what he is doing to take forward his policy to promote traffic-calming measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Government support was given to the private Member's Bill on traffic calming which

received Royal Assent on 16 March. We propose to bring forward regulations later this year. The Department is continuing to provide technical guidance to local authorities on the introduction of traffic-calming measures generally, and to encourage the introduction of 20 mph zones.

We are making good progress with bypass demonstration project launched in January; we have published jointly with the Department of the Environment a new version of design bulletin 32 on residential roads and footpaths; and we are aiming very shortly to publish an interim report from a joint working group with the County Surveyors Society on the control of traffic speeds through villages.

Roads, West Cumbria

22. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has reached for further roads development in west Cumbria.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are currently 18 schemes in the road programme for Cumbria either under construction or in preparation with a total estimated cost in excess of £200 million.

Five of these schemes are in west Cumbria. There are no proposals to add to this programme at present.

Channel Tunnel

23. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what date he anticipates that the proposed channel tunnel fast link will be operational.

Mr. Freeman: It is too soon to say. No decision has yet been made on when construction may start.

Municipal Airports

24. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to encourage the privatisation of municipally owned airports.

Mr. Norris: We wish to see the local authority airports develop and prosper. But as pressure on public sector spending continues, they will have to look increasingly to the private sector to share in the successes and the risks associated with continued expansion.

Peakes Parking Project

25. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to announce his decision on phase III of the Peakes parking project following the public inquiry of March 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A decision on the Compulsory Purchase Order and Side Roads Order, submitted by Humberside county council, in respect of the Peakes parkway road scheme will be issued shortly.

London Traffic

27. **Mr. Keith Hill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to reduce the volume of traffic on London's roads.

Mr. Norris: Our approach is set out in the consultation document "Draft Traffic Management and Parking Guidance for London" published on 11 March. It states that some modernisation in the growth of demand will be achieved by providing through traffic with good alternative routes around London, such as widening the M25, and by encouraging a switch to public transport by improving and extending London's rail networks, making bus travel more attractive and encouraging local authorities to adopt appropriate parking policies and parking standards associated with new development. We are keeping an open mind on the benefits or otherwise of road pricing pending the results of the study now under way.

East Coast Rail Line

28. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the electrification of the main east coast rail line will be completed.

Mr. Freeman: Electrification of the east coast main line to Edinburgh was completed in July 1991. British Rail has at present no plans for further electrification of the line north of Edinburgh.

London Underground

29. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of London Underground to discuss improvements to the underground rail network.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend and I shall be meeting the chairman of London Underground on a regular basis to discuss various matters, including improvements to the underground.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's estimate of the annual level of capital investment needed to avoid any further deterioration of the London Underground; and what level of subsidy from Her Majesty's Government is proposed for such capital investment.

Mr. Norris: In evidence to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission last year, London Underground Ltd. said that an average expenditure of £700 million to £750 million needed to be maintained over the remainder of the decade in order to provide an acceptably modern underground. The grant provision announced in the autumn statement is sufficient to allow for this level to be attained in 1993-94.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail about its electrification programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: When particular routes need to be re-equipped, British Rail consider on a case-by-case basis whether electrification is justified. It is for BR, in the first instance, to assess the case and to determine priorities within its investment programme.

Sexual Offences

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many cases of serious sexual offences against men have taken place on the London Underground in the last year.

Mr. Norris: There has been one serious incident on the London Underground involving an indecent offence against a male reported in the last year.

Cycling

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has of the change in the amount of use of cycles as a normal means of transport to work, shopping, and so on; and what contacts his Department has with organisations representing *(a)* the manufacturers and retailers and *(b)* the users of cycles.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Recent analysis of the 1988-89 national travel survey reveals that the number of cycles used has doubled since the mid-1970s to about 15 million. Somewhere between 4 per cent. and 5 per cent. of the population use bicycles as transport to work.

Officials of the Department have continuous contacts with organisations representing cycling interests. These comprise formal meetings, correspondence and telephone conversations.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures his Department has taken since 1987 to encourage the use of cycles as an environmentally friendly means of transport, including encouraging local authorities to provide dedicated routes for cyclists; and what studies his Department has carried out of the practice in other European Community countries with a view to *(a)* encouraging the use of bicycles and *(b)* ensuring the rights of pedestrians are respected.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Over the last five years we have carried through the cycle routes programme of research commenced in 1983. This was undertaken to measure the effects of continuous cycle routes in urban areas, particularly on cycle safety and levels of use. The aim was to acces the value and practicality of such schemes for general application. Preliminary results were reported at the international Velo City conference in Milan in 1991, and a final report is due to be published later this year.

We take careful note of devoloping practice in other EC countries, in addition to the continuing programme of research which we have undertaken in the United Kingdom. Our extensive series of traffic advisory leaflets and local transport notes on cycling encourage local authorities to provide facilities for cyclists, including the establishment of cycle routes. We also stress the importance of taking full account of the rights of pedestrians when introducing features to help cyclists.

Car Owners' Details

Mr. Sherman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to change the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971 to remove the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's power to supply the name and address of car owners routinely on the payment of £3·50.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The provision which permits the disclosure of the names and addresses of vehicle owners in certain circumstances is well established and has been of considerable assistance to road users over the years. We have no plans to remove it.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had from women's organisations regarding the willingness of the driver and vehicle licensing centre in Swansea to supply the name and address of a motorist-vehicle owner routinely for payment.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None.

Porous Asphalt

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his assessment and evaluation of porous asphalt as a road surface material.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer the hon. Member to my statement during the recent debate on noise and spray benefits of porous asphalt—*Official Report*, 15 May 1992, column 915.

Networker Trains

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what investment approval he has given to complete the Networker build for Kent link services.

Mr. Freeman: The then Secretary of State gave approval for the 188 Networkers necessary to complete the replacement build for Kent link services on 19 June 1991. That approval was amended on 20 March 1992 in the light of updated tenders and an order for those vehicles was placed on 10 April.

British Rail

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what countries he intends to visit in furtherance of information about his proposals for British Rail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend and I are considering visits to a number of countries, to gain first-hand knowledge of private sector rail operations; details are yet to be finalised. I am sure that this will prove useful in the detailed implementation of our policies for restructuring British Rail.

M3

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters he has received calling for the M3 Bar End-Compton to be put into a tunnel under Twyford down.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department has received a number of letters about the M3 Bar End-Compton scheme including some suggesting that it should be put in a tunnel under Twyford down.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place a copy of the amending regulations to the orange badge disabled parking scheme which came into effect on 2 March in the Library.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Copies of the amending regulations to the orange badge disabled parking scheme which came into effect on 2 March 1992 have been placed in the Library.

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from Trust House Forte in connection with his consultation document on motorway service areas and their contract for the M11 services area.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Forte restaurants have responded to the consultation document. Their comments are now being considered along with the replies we have received from some 200 other consultees.

The chief executive of the company informed my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 6 March that he was postponing further work on construction of the M11 service area at Birchanger until future policy on motorway service areas is clarified following the consultation exercise.

Train Carriages

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment the railway inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive has made of the safety implications of the locking of one in four carriages on trains on the Fenchurch Street and Southend line via Tilbury.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail decided to lock the guard's compartment and the saloon immediately adjacent to it to safeguard passengers when an electrical fault occurred in the transformers on some trains. I understand that this is a short-term precaution pending resolution of the problem and affects only 17 coaches of the 106 units currently in service.

British Rail has taken measures to reduce possible overcrowding including the provision of additional stock from other lines. I understand that Her Majesty's railway inspectorate has kept closely in touch with British Rail about this matter since this fault developed. It is satisfied that the measures taken will have no adverse effect on safety. British Rail is seeking an early resolution to these problems and hopes to have all the coaches fully available for passenger use as soon as possible.

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effect bus deregulation has had on route coverage.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) earlier today.

M1-M62 Link

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make plans for the proposed route of the M1-M62 link road publicly available in a larger scale than 1:1250.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* Larger scale plans would be prepared only much later in the design process should any of the options be developed further.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what methods of assessment of visual impact or intrusion have been used by his Department in the development of proposals for an M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* Visual impact of the proposals has been assessed in accordance with the methods set out in the Department's manual of environmental appraisal.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Shellfish

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will specify which body is responsible for the regulation of the harvesting of shellfish in Northern Ireland coastal waters and beaches.

Mr. Hanley: Legislation to regulate the fishing industry is generally implemented on a United Kingdom wide basis by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland acting in concert. Under the Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966 and the Diseases of Fish Act (Northern Ireland) 1967, however, the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland also enjoys certain regulatory powers of its own.

Gathering shellfish from the foreshore of Belfast lough west of Black head and Orlock point is prohibited under the Belfast Corporation Act (Northern Ireland) 1930 and responsibility for enforcing this lies with the local district councils.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a table showing the amount of shellfish harvested by species in each of the last five years and their principal areas of extraction.

Mr. Hanley: The following is the information:

Farmed shellfish

Year	*Pacific oysters tonnes*	*Native oysters tonnes*	*Mussels tonnes*	*Clams tonnes*	*Cockles tonnes*
1987	98·720	—	14·135	—	—
1988	125·650	—	26·424	—	1·000
1989	199·711	16·080	104·040	0·085	1·700
1990	152·110	29·150	386·620	1·200	2·750
1991	169·620	21·700	1934·560	0·320	2·800

Note: The principal areas of cultivation are Strangford Lough, Belfast Lough and Dundrum Inner Bay.

Wild Shellfish

(Tonnes)

Species	*1987*		*1988*		*1989*		*1990*		*1991*	
	West of Scotland (ICES Area VIa)	*Irish Sea (ICES Area VIIa)*	*West of Scotland (ICES Area VIa)*	*Irish Sea (ICES Area VIIa)*	*West of Scotland (ICES Area VIa)*	*Irish Sea (ICES Area VIIa)*	*West of Scotland (ICES Area VIa)*	*Irish Sea (ICES Area VIIa)*	*West of Scotland (ICES Area VIa)*	*Irish Sea (ICES Area VIIa)*
Crabs	6·145	17·645	8·090	71·554	29·198	68·723	9·020	373·527	5·658	484·365
Velvet Crabs	—	—	—	2·959	—	0·807	—	24·569	—	77·696
Lobsters	8·182	5·388	9·135	7·863	5·896	9·690	8·760	3·743	4·404	6·472
Nephrops	2·745	5,102·216	17·642	5,326·428	16·263	5,604·026	30·507	5,675·214	25·112	6,013·702
Whelks	—	1·740	—	12·034	—	—	—	—	—	—

Species	1987 West of Scotland (ICES Area VIa)	1987 Irish Sea (ICES Area VIIa)	1988 West of Scotland (ICES Area VIa)	1988 Irish Sea (ICES Area VIIa)	1989 West of Scotland (ICES Area VIa)	1989 Irish Sea (ICES Area VIIa)	1990 West of Scotland (ICES Area VIa)	1990 Irish Sea (ICES Area VIIa)	1991 West of Scotland (ICES Area VIa)	1991 Irish Sea (ICES VIIa)
Queen Scallops	—	240·251	—	22·582	—	53·018	—	78·862	0·152	191·175
Scallops	11·712	296·697	—	222·171	9·171	316·639	46·312	215·025	40·783	188·875
Squid	—	22·242	1·511	81·735	0·095	105·599	1·257	72·762	3·885	33·042
Mussels	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	260·000	—	1,810·000

Weekly Newspapers

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial support is being given by the Local Enterprise Development Unit to assist the publication of the new weekly newspaper, *The Cross Examiner;* where *The Cross Examiner* will be printed; what are the implications for employment in the existing weekly newspapers in circulation in the Newry/Mourne areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: LEDU has offered *The Cross Examiner* financial support by way of employment grant totalling £16,000.

The Cross Examiner will be published in Northern Ireland but will initially be printed in Monaghan.

Before offering assistance towards the publication of *The Cross Examiner* LEDU assured itself that the new newspaper will have no significant adverse effect on employment levels in existing competing publications.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which weekly newspapers in Northern Ireland are to receive financial support from the Local Enterprise Development Unit during the current year.

Mr. Atkins: LEDU has made offers of assistance to the *Derg and District News* and *The Cross Examiner* which could result in both receiving financial support during the current year.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which weekly newspapers in Northern Ireland have received financial support from the Local Enterprise Development Unit in each of the past five years.

Mr. Atkins: The Northern Ireland Newspapers Group received financial support during 1987 and this support continued in 1988. Nuachtain received assistance in 1990.

Car Parks, Donaghadee

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals there are for additional car parks in Donaghadee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: A recent proposal to provide a new central park in New street, Donaghadee was withdrawn as a result of local opposition. There are no other proposals to provide additional car parking at present.

Voting

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, pursuant to his answer 12 May, column 76, he will publish *(a)* the number of postal votes issued, *(b)* the number of postal votes returned and *(c)* the numbers of proxies appointed for each parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland for the 1992 general election.

Mr. Hanley: The information is as follows:

Constituencies	Postal Votes issued	Postal Votes returned	Proxies appointed
Belfast East	486	412	195
Belfast North	374	316	241
Belfast South	675	573	181
Belfast West	443	348	271
East Antrim	706	600	296
East Londonderry	2,010	1,864	399
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	5,417	4,910	430
Foyle	1,285	1,156	246
Lagan Valley	844	740	260
Mid-Ulster	3,245	3,057	393
Newry and Armagh	3,384	3,086	195
North Antrim	831	746	201
North Down	755	659	293
South Antrim	676	568	286
South Down	4,166	3,872	1,192
Strangford	698	579	240
Upper Bann	1,587	1,421	266
Total	27,582	24,907	5,585

DEFENCE

RAF Brawdy

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what financial contribution will be made by the United States naval facility at Brawdy to *(a)* estate and property management costs and *(b)* security by RAF personnel when flight training ends at RAF Brawdy, in financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94;

(2) what was the financial contribution made by the United States Government towards the United States naval facility at Brawdy for *(a)* property and estate management and *(b)* security in financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and the current financial year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States naval facility at RAF Brawdy is subject to a bilateral agreement between the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States, the details of which are confidential.

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimate of the total annual net pay of RAF personnel that will be based at RAF Brawdy after flight training ends in the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total gross annual pay of RAF service personnel at RAF Brawdy in 1993-94 will be approximately £2·5 million. Net pay is estimated to be about 30 per cent. less. A precise net figure could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to representatives of his Department's meeting with consultants Conran Roche or members of the task force set up by the Secretary of State for Wales to discuss alternative uses, within his Department, for RAF Brawdy and RNAD Trecwn.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence has been represented on the west Wales task force since its inception. Officials have already met with Conran Roche, and will do so again as necessary in the future.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the estimate of total saving to his Department's budget by ending flight training at RAF Brawdy in the financial years of 1992-93 and 1993-94;

(2) what will be the saving to his Department's budget in property and estate management costs by ending flight training at RAF Brawdy in the financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94;

(3) what will be the saving to his Department's budget in base security costs when flight training ceases at RAF Brawdy in financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94;

(4) what will be the saving to his Department's budget in service personnel costs by ending flight training at RAF Brawdy for financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Ending flying training at RAF Brawdy will save an average of £2 million a year over a 10-year period.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total monthly net pay for all RAF personnel currently based at RAF Brawdy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total gross pay for all RAF personnel at RAF Brawdy was £977,373 for the month of March 1992. Net pay would have been about 30 per cent. less. A precise net figure could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of those service personnel presently employed at RAF Brawdy will be made redundant when flight training ceases at RAF Brawdy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No service personnel presently employed at RAF Brawdy will be made redundant as a result of the cessation of flying training.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total expenditure on local contracts and purchases by RAF Brawdy in financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what are the estimates for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: For 1990-91 total expenditure on local contracts and purchases is estimated at approximately £340,000 and for 1991-92 approximately £290,000. Figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are not available but are expected to commensurate with the planned rundown.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF service personnel will be transferred from RAF Brawdy when it ceases flight training activities; how many of them will go to other flight training bases; and how many of them will go to duties other than those connected with flight training bases.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: When all activities related to flying training have ceased some 560 RAF personnel will be progressively transferred from RAF Brawdy. It is not yet possible to say how many will go to flying training stations or how many will go to other duties as this will depend on service requirements, individual preference and career development.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what studies are taking place by his Department's officials into alternative uses for RAF Brawdy and RNAD Trecwn; what plans he has for these to involve representatives of the Secretary of State for Wales's task force; and when the report will be published;

(2) what investigations were made by his Department into alternative uses within his Department for RAF Brawdy before the announcement that flight training would end there.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Although flying training at RAF Brawdy is to cease this year the station will remain open. Studies have taken place into alternative defence activities that could be accommodated at the station. None has arisen. My Department is still investigating possible defence uses for RNAD Trecwn, failing which the site will be offered to other Government Departments. Officials of my Department are taking part in the consideration of other uses currently being undertaken by the west Wales task force set up by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total annual net pay for all RAF personnel based at RAF Brawdy in the financial years 1991-92 and 1990-91.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total gross pay for all RAF personnel based at RAF Brawdy was £9·9 million in 1990-91 and £11·3 million in 1991-92. Total net pay was about 30 per cent. less. A precise net figure could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Low Frequency Monitoring

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest position on proposals to establish an extremely low frequency listening post of Sron A'Choire Ghairbh beside Loch Lochy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the programme to construct an experimental extremely low frequency transmitter at the location he describes. I have nothing further to add to the answer given by the then Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 14 February 1991, announcing our decision not to proceed with this project.

Naval Support Command

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the date on which Ministers approved the proposals to restructure the fleet support.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In March 1992 Ministers endorsed a package of proposals designed to achieve staff savings and restructure the Department's headquarters organisation as a contribution to overall economies in the support area. One of these proposals was the establishment of a new naval support command.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how large the establishment of the proposed naval support command will be.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The headquarters establishment of the new naval support command will be in the order of 3,300.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where the staff who will make up the proposed naval support command are currently situated.

Mr, Archie Hamilton: The naval support command will bring together staff currently located in or near Bath, London, Portsmouth, Weymouth and Stockton-on-Tees.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the advantages and disadvantages of collocating all naval support command staff on one site.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Work is under way to assess all relevant factors involved in setting up the new naval support command including the costs and benefits of full collocation. A principal advantage gained from the collocation of headquarters staff would be the greater effectiveness of multi-disciplinary groups dedicated to supporting equipments and systems in service.

Staff Relocation

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of relocating staff from Eaglescliffe to Bath.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: About £2 million.

ENVIRONMENT

Development Land

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has, or what proposals he is investigating, for payment on deferred terms by developers for land obtained by them for development within areas controlled by urban development corporations.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department is currently considering a proposal for a development under which the London Docklands development corporation will benefit from a deferred profit share arrangement.

New Forest

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet decided upon a date for granting national park status to the New Forest.

Mr. Maclean: No. We intend to introduce legislation as soon as a convenient opportunity can be found.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the New Forest is in the first tranche of local authorities covered by the Local Government Commission's recommendations for reorganisation.

Mr. Robin Squire: We hope to make an announcement about the Local Government Commission's programme of areas before the summer recess. Areas where there is a history of dissatisfaction with the existing local government structure will be high on the commission's list of priorities.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the timetable for the first tranche of recommendations under the local government commission's proposals for the reorganisation of local government.

Mr. Robin Squire: The commission will begin its reviews of areas, as directed by the Secretary of State, as soon as practicable after it has been set up. We hope that the commission will make recommendations in time for the first new authorities to be established on 1 April 1994. Others will take longer.

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to appoint the local government commission and its staff; and how long he expects it will take for the commission to review the structure of local government and make recommendations.

Mr. Robin Squire: We intend to set up the new local government commission this summer.

We want the commission to complete its reviews of local government structure as quickly as possible, subject to the need to give proper consideration to the complex issues involved. We hope that the commission will make recommendations in time for the first new unitary authorities to be established on 1 April 1994. Recommendations on other areas are likely to lead to other unitary authorities being set up later.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the procedures adopted by the local government commission in its review of local government.

Mr. Robin Squire: The procedures for the local government commission to follow are set out in general terms in section 15 of the Local Government Act 1992. My right hon. Friend will issue guidance to the commission, building on these statutory requirements. Detailed procedures for the conduct of individual reviews will be a matter for the commission itself.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to introduce legislation to extend compulsory competitive tendering to local authority housing management; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: A consultation paper setting out our proposals will be published within the next few weeks.

European Community Environmental Law

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any agreement has been reached between the European Communities and the European Free Trade Association to apply EC environmental law in EFTA states.

Mr. Maclean: Under the agreement on the European economic area, signed on 2 May and due to enter into force on 1 January 1993, the EFTA countries will be bound by most EC environmental legislation forming part of the single market provisions. Annex XX to the agreement lists the 32 items of environmental legislation which fall into this category. The agreement also provides for closer co-operation between EC and EFTA countries in the field of the environment and specifies that "environmental protection requirements shall be a component of the Contracting Parties' other policies".

The official text of the signed version of the agreement will be deposited in Parliament as soon as it is received.

Waste Carriers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress made in the registration of waste carriers under the provisions of the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989.

Mr. Maclean: The Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989 came fully into force on 1 April 1992 and the responsibility to apply for registration rests with those who transport controlled waste. Each waste regulation authority is required to establish and maintain a public register of carriers and the register must include a copy of each application made to the authority. As indicated in DOE circular 11/91—paragraphs 8 and 9—a co-ordinated national database of carriers is also being established by waste regulation authorities.

Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the principle of equal per capita emissions rights; and if it will be included in his forthcoming submission to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Maclean: The preamble to the United Nations framework convention on climate change recognises that per capita emissions in developing countries are still relatively low and that the share of global emissions originating in developing countries will grow to meet their social and development needs.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to provide for the disconnection of all toxic industrial discharges to sewers and the immediate cessation of any new consent to discharge toxic industrial waste into sewers.

Mr. Maclean: No. Under the Water Industry Act 1991 it is for sewerage undertakers, and in the case of special category effluent for the Secretary of State, to determine whether to accept such discharges and to set appropriate consent conditions. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 it is for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, in consultation with sewerage undertakers, to include appropriate conditions in authorizations for processes subject to integrated pollution control, and for the chief inspector to have regard to the best practicable environmental option, which may include disposal to sewer.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether sufficient countries have ratified the Basel convention on the transfrontier movement and disposal of hazardous waste for the convention to enter into force.

Mr. Maclean: Yes. The Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal came into force on 5 May.

Closed Churchyards

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet representatives from Newcastle borough council and local authority associations to discuss section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972 involving the additional costs incurred following the taking over of maintenance of closed churchyards.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has no plans to amend section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972, which simply continues a system which has existed since 1855. Such costs are taken into account when deciding the revenue support grant.

Earth Summit

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment his Department has made of the "Bottom Line" booklet published by Greenpeace prior to the United Nations earth summit in Rio de Janeiro.

Mr. Maclean: The Department has studied the Greenpeace booklet and taken note of the views expressed by that organisation.

Wildlife

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will introduce a wildlife enhancement scheme; what its scope will be; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The wildlife enhancement scheme was launched by English Nature as a three-year pilot in November 1991. It provides annual and fixed cost payments to farmers who agree to adopt management practices which will maintain and enhance the nature conservation value of their land. The scheme is presently open to owners and occupiers in the Pevensey Levels sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) in Sussex, the Culm Grasslands SSSIs on the Devon and Cornwall border, and the Coversand Heath and Peatland SSSIs in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Sustainable Living

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to adopt a declaration and covenant committing the United Kingdom to the ethic of sustainable living, including a definition of rights and responsibilities.

Mr. Maclean: This Government's commitment to the principle of sustainable development was clearly set out in the 1990 environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance". We will develop policies on environmental rights and responsibilities through the citizens charter initiative.

National Parks

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will bring forward plans to give the New Forest the statutory protection of national park status.

Mr. Maclean: We intend to introduce legislation as soon as a convenient opportunity can be found.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will bring forward plans to increase the resources, responsibilities and local accountability of national park authorities.

Mr. Maclean: We cannot commit ourselves to any specific future level of resources for the national parks, but our record on funding them is a good one. National parks supplementary grant has risen by well over 50 per cent. in real terms over the last five years and 24 per cent. more money was made available to the parks in 1992-93 than in 1991-92. In January, we announced our intention to introduce legislation to create all national park authorities as independent bodies, though still within the local government framework, and to take steps to ensure truly local representation on them. The move to independence will bring to the national park authorities freedom to manage their own affairs and a more undivided commitment to park objectives. We will introduce legislation as soon as a convenient opportunity can be found.

Species Recovery Scheme

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will expand the species recovery scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The "recovery" scheme to assist specific native plants and animals in danger of extinction was launched by English Nature in April 1991. Fourteen species were included in the scheme in 1991-92 and English Nature plans to increase this to 21 in 1992-93.

Disabled People (Housing)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by district council, the number of applications made for adaptations to the homes of disabled people in each of the last five years; how many adaptations were carried out in each year; and what was the average length of time to complete adaptations from the request for an adaptation to be made to its conclusion.

Mr. Baldry: The current system of renovation grants, which was introduced in June 1990 under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, includes disabled facilities grants. Information about final payments of these grants, which correspond to adaptations carried out, will be shortly published for 1990 and 1991 in "Local Housing Statistics: England and Wales" issue No. 101. An advance copy of the relevant tables has been deposited in the Library.

For earlier periods, payments of improvement and intermediate grants were made for disabled persons' dwellings under the Housing Act 1985. Details are also shown in "Local Housing Statistics", in the following issues:

1987—Issue No. 87, Table 11
1988—Issue No. 90, Table 14
1989—Issue No. 94, Table 13
1990—Issue No. 98, Table 11

Copies of these issues are available in the Library. A table showing payments during 1991 under the 1985 Act has been deposited in the Library.

Figures are not available at district level about the number of applications for grants or about the average length of time to complete work funded by grants.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by district council the number of *(a)* owner-occupiers and private tenants and *(b)* council tenants who have applied in each of the last two years for the disabled facilities grant; how many adaptations were carried out in each category; what was the average length of time taken to complete adaptations from the request for an adaptation to be made to its conclusion in each category; and in each category what was the average amount paid by (i) applicants, (ii) district councils and (iii) central Government.

Mr. Baldry: A table has been deposited in the Library with the available information about payments of disabled facilities grants under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 during the financial year 1990-91. Figures for the subsequent year are not yet available.

The table shows the numbers of grants paid to owner-occupants and types of tenant and, without an analysis by occupancy, both the average value of grants and the average contribution from the applicant towards the cost of works.

The Department provides a 75 per cent. Exchequer contribution towards local authorities' expenditure in England on disabled facilities grants for owner-occupiers and private tenants. Expenditure on these grants for council tenants is eligible for 100 per cent. subsidy from the housing revenue account.

Figures of the number of applications for grants and the average length of time to complete work funded by grants are not available at district level.

Aggregates

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres or hectares of the borough of Thurrock, Essex, are currently being exploited for the extraction of aggregates; and which other local authority districts within south-east England have a higher proportion of their land area currently being used for this purpose.

Mr. Baldry: I regret that this information is not available.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list details of the importation of chemical or toxic waste into the United Kingdom via *(a)* the port of Tilbury and *(b)* other docks, wharfs or jetties within the county of Essex over the past five years.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the importation of hazardous waste into the United Kingdom is available only for the period since the introduction of the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations in October 1988.

The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Port*	*Quantity (Tonnes)*
October 1988 to March 1989	Tilbury	83
	Harwich	104
	Purfleet	100
Total October 1988 to March 1989		287

Year	Port	Quantity (Tonnes)
April 1989 to March 1990	Tilbury	13
	Harwich	154
	Purfleet	12
Total 1989 to 1990		179
April 1990 to March 1991	Tilbury	26
	Harwich	2,383
Total 1990 to 1991		2,409
April 1991 to March 1992	Harwich	3,021
Total 1991 to 1992		3,021
Total October 1988 to March 1992		5,896

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which body has responsibility for ensuring that tipping of chemical, toxic or other waste into pits within a particular district authority complies with the licences, and health and safety regulations; and what information he has on the frequency with which such checks have been made in respect of each pit in the borough of Thurrock over the past two years.

Mr. Maclean: Essex county council, as waste regulation authority for the Thurrock area, is responsible for granting disposal licences and monitoring them to ensure that their conditions are adhered to and continue to be appropriate. It is the responsibility of the local office of the Health and Safety Executive to ensure that the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 are not breached.

The Department has no record of the number of site visits made by Essex county council in Thurrock. It would be for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to advise as to any steps taken to monitor compliance with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department keeps on the location and size of waste dumps in each local authority area, together with the type and amount of waste accepted in each dump; what such information is available for the borough of Thurrock; and if he will make it his policy to maintain such information as is not already kept centrally.

Mr. Maclean: The Department does not keep detailed information on the size and location of waste disposal facilities. Waste regulation authorities maintain on public registers copies of disposal licences for each facility in their area. Essex county council is the waste regulation authority which covers Thurrock. An environment agency which included the waste regulation functions of local authorities would also have responsibility for the maintenance of the licence information they currently hold.

Climate Change

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the Government's position on the Sao Paulo statement on global climate change and the emission of greenhouse gases.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* The United Kingdom welcomed the first report of the United Nations Environment Programme-World Meteorological Office intergovernmental panel on climate change which included the declaration agreed in Sao Paulo in January 1990 by the agricultural, forestry and other human activities sub-group.

Sink Benefits

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy on sink benefits, equal rights of access to sink benefits and use of the global commons; and how they will feature in his Department's submission to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* The United Kingdom supports the commitment contained in article 4 of the United Nations framework convention on climate change that all countries should promote sustainable management and promote and co-operate in the conservation and enhancement of sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases. Increases in the absorption of greenhouse gases by sinks will benefit all countries in limiting potential climate change.

Equitable Emissions Restraint

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on equitable emissions restraint at source; whether this concept will feature in his submission to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* The United Kingdom supports article 3 of the United Nations framework convention on climate change which states that all parties should protect the climate system on the basis of equity and in accordance with countries' common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and that accordingly developed countries should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof.

Wild Birds

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider taking steps to ban the importation of wild-caught birds into the United Kingdom; what consideration he has given to the recommendations on this subject of the recent Joint Nature Conservation Committee report; and if he will press within the Community for legislation to outlaw the wild bird trade in Europe.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* The Government keep this issue under very close review. Last year we endorsed the conclusions of the report prepared

for us by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee that we should continue to support the present framework of selective international controls on the wildlife trade and that we should refrain from a general ban, as this would remove a potentially important incentive to conserve species abroad. We regard the principle of sustainable use of natural resources as an important aspect of our approach to conservation worldwide.

We have vigorously pursued the JNCC's detailed recommendations for improved implementation of the current controls; in October last year we wrote to the European Commission urging it to propose EC-wide action and in March at the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species conference in Japan we pressed successfully for effect to be given by 115 countries worldwide to one of the JNCC's most important proposals. This will require exporting countries to make proper assessments of the impact of trade on certain species to avoid import bans by other countries.

The European Commission has now responded to our concerns by proposing a strong new regulation on the wildlife trade. We intend to make this a priority for our presidency of the European Community later this year.

With colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and food, we are also introducing a number of tighter controls to protect birds in transport. The United Kingdom played a prominent part at the CITES conference in gaining worldwide acceptance of the need to suspend trade in birds suffering unacceptably high mortality.

Seals

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to bring forward proposals to amend the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 in order to ban the shooting of seals on the grounds of fisheries protection.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply. We have no plans to do so.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment in his office;

(2) when his office last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement;

(3) how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office has 31 staff, many of whom are on loan from other civil service Departments. It has no staff in grades 1 and 2, and has three permanent staff in grades 3 to 7, none of whom are members of ethnic minorities. Five per cent. of permanent staff below grade 7 are members of such minorities. Given this background, the conduct of surveys is inappropriate. On the rare occasions when direct recruitment is undertaken, every effort is made to ensure that selection procedures are fair and non-discriminatory.

EC Parliaments

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will publish a table showing the opportunities for individual hon. Members to ask questions of Ministers and the Head of Government; to introduce draft legislation, participate in debates on subjects chosen by an opposition grouping, raise a specific grievance at a regular interval, apply to an authority not controlled by Government for leave to ask an emergency question or initiate an emergency debate, table and debate a motion on any topic or be free to change political allegiance between elections, in each of the Parliaments of the member states of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Newton: Parliamentary procedures, practices and conventions vary widely in the parliaments of the member states of the European Community according to traditions and needs. To supply the information requested by the hon. Member would involve detailed consultation of the parliaments of the other member states and could therefore be made available only at disproportionate cost.

EMPLOYMENT

Freight Forwarding Agents

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she is taking to compensate those freight forwarding agents and their staff who will lose their jobs as a direct result of the ending of customs controls between members of the European Community on 1 January 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We await the formal publication of a study initiated by the European Commission into the effect on the freight forwarding industry of the removal of customs barriers when the single European market is completed.

Employees dismissed because of redundancy and who satisfy the qualifying conditions may be entitled to redundancy payments under employment protection legislation.

To anyone unfortunate enough to lose his job the Government are now offering a comprehensive range of help and advice. In 1992-93 we are providing almost 1 million places on employment, enterprise and training programmes through the networks of employment service job centres and training and enterprise councils.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has in relation to each industrial tribunal situated on the Wales and Chester circuit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Cardiff regional office has recently acquired some additional accommodation, and this will provide for an additional tribunal hearing room to deal with the increased caseload. The associated office at Shrewsbury, which serves mid and north Wales and parts of the Welsh Marches, has recently moved to new and larger premises, and these new premises also provide for an additional hearing room. Hearings are also held by visiting tribunals at other towns in the region, as determined by the president. There are no immediate plans to further change the tribunal premises, but the matter will be kept under review.

SCOTLAND

Milk Industry

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the talks of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), with *(a)* the President of the Scottish National Farmers Union, *(b)* the Milk Marketing Board and *(c)* the Scottish Dairy Trade Federation on the milk industry in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: I recently had useful discussions with the president and his senior colleagues in the National Farmers Union of Scotland about a number of matters including the future of milk marketing in Scotland. I hope to meet the three milk marketing boards in Scotland and the Scottish Dairy Trade Federation soon.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to dispose of all, or any part of, the Forestry Commission's assets; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The Government's policy on the disposal of Forestry Commission land and woodlands was set out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) on 16 June 1989, *Official Report*, columns 542-43. This has not changed.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to privatise the Forestry Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The Government have no such plans.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the land owned by the Forestry Commission which is currently up for sale, giving the name, amount of land involved and the length of time it has been on the market, in each county or region; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* The following forest areas are at present being offered for sale on the open market:

County/Region and Name	*Area (hectares)*	*Period on the Market (months)*
ENGLAND		
Avon		
Abbots Wood—East	1	1
East Tandit	6	1
Old Park Wood	10	1
Round Hill Clump	2	1
Scutches	5	1
Three Corner Wood	3	1
Warren House	3	1
West Tandit/Ox House	16	1
Wraxall	13	1
Yewtree/Snakes Well Fishpond	11	1
Cornwall		
Hay Wood	54	21
Treworgey	17	21
Cumbria		
Walton Wood	89	24
Devon		
Brownsham Woods	71	21
Deershill Wood	11	21
Pulsworthy	3	21
Dorset		
Alders Coppice	7	9
Durham		
Edenhill Woods	16	24
Stanley Woods	64	36
Hampshire		
Bordean Estate, Fishers Copse	28	39
Mill Copse	6	12
Roke Mead Copse	9	27
Tapnell	50	10
Lincolnshire		
Wraby Wood	70	6
Norfolk		
Blackwater Plantation	4	5
Northamptonshire		
Hartwell Copse	7	6
Northumberland		
Corbies Crags Wood	54	36
North Yorkshire		
Averhams Wood	52	6
Black Plantation	14	12
Deighton Wood	5	2
Fishpond Wood	6	12
West Gateforth	47	18
Howsham Wood	81	3
Red House Wood	48	2
Sawley Outliers	42	2
Seaton Old Wood	5	12
Turf Graft Wood	3	12
Shropshire		
Coed Detton	14	21
Preston Springs	38	1
Somerset		
Barrow Wood	13	19
Church Wood	6	20
Higher Bitcombe	30	20
Lower Bitcombe	18	20
South Yorkshire		
Green Springs	12	18
The Old Park	41	16
Walker Wood	6	18
Suffolk		
Langley High Wood	49	5
Wiltshire		
Chittoe Heath	19	10
Fry's Wood	24	32
Kidney Bean	3	10
Lower Selves	10	10
New Plantation	8	10
SCOTLAND		
Dumfries and Galloway		
Glaik	63	24
Lochnaw Estate (part)	57	24
Fife		
Drumtennant Strip	4	11
Rameldry West	8	13
Grampian		
Barlatch	3	11
Drakemyres	32	12
East Corrennie and Parkstyle	5	1
Hillend Moss	16	14
Knock Hill Wood	56	14
Mormond Hill	255	7
Tertonie	7	10

County/Region and Name	Area (hectares)	Period on the Market (months)
Wogle	26	10
Highland		
Cuileannach Woodlands	237	5
Strathclyde		
Ballimony and Dunlossit	3,211	16
Carrick Wood	68	7
Daljarrock	52	24
Dalsmirren (part)	1,094	6
Todlaw	370	11
WALES		
Clwyd		
Coed Esgynfa	6	11
Coed Pen Y Gelli	29	11
Crown Wood	29	11
Glol Plantation	27	11
Dyfed		
Allt Banc Sina	18	13
Allt Fawr	7	19
Allt Llwyn Dyfrion	11	13
Allt Pistyll Dewi	33	13
Bwlch Newydd	8	26
Bylchau Duon	62	30
Cilfowyr	5	17
Coed Ffridd Cwmere	20	22
Coed Gwastad	28	27
Coedmore, Coed Newydd	17	27
Coedmore, Home Farm Wood	3	27
Coed Rhyd Tir	16	22
Cwm Cynfelin	8	44
Cynheidre Uchaf	24	10
Danygraig	10	13
Fforest	22	19
Ffynon Lefrith	25	30
Gallt y Cribin	7	17
Glebe Woods	17	13
Glynllydan	8	4
Lon Isaf	7	11
Lower Scourfield	13	23
Maestwynog	12	42
Pant Eynon and Allt y Forlan	29	13
Pencwn Fawr	9	19
Penhill Wood	4	19
Portis Pant	30	13
Quay	17	13
Rams Wood	26	23
Scolton	30	11
Tanyrallt	6	42
Troserch	35	19
Tynton Wood	4	19
Waun Baglan Woods	26	26
Wenallt	17	10
Gwent		
Coed Castellau	48	8
Craig y Merchant	24	8
Darren Ddu	8	8
Hafodrisclawdd	23	8
Luggas Wood and Youngs Grove	15	21
Gwynedd		
Coed Dyfi	17	22
Coed Ty Uchaf	15	11
Glyn Estate	49	7
Moel Groes Heol	130	12
Powys		
Allt Cwm Tywyll	6	1
Craig Yr Henffordd	8	10
Cwmbach and Cwmcoch	44	22
Great Wood	9	22
Pwll Llydan	31	10
West Glamorgan		
Craig Ynysgollen	10	57
Gelligaer	33	47

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the financial limits on the current home improvement grants scheme; and when they were last increased.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 May 1992]:* Local authorities may give various grants for works of improvement or repair. The amount which they may offer is limited by the percentage rate of grant in each case and by statutory maxima which govern the cost of works eligible for grant assistance. The various percentage rates of grant, and the approved maximum cost for each, are given in a Scottish Office publication "Improve Your Home with a Grant", which is available in the Library.

The percentage rates of grant have been little changed since 1984, when the rate of repairs grant for works to replace lead plumbing was set at 75 per cent. The various expense maxima are amended from time to time and were most recently changed in 1988.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider increasing the current ceilings on grants available for home improvements.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have received few representations that the various approved expense limits for works qualifying for improvement or repairs grant should be generally increased. Therefore, I see no strong grounds for a review, although the limits are considered periodically. Where a local authority considers that there are good reasons for the cost of works to exceed the relevant limit, it may seek my right hon. Friend's approval to increase that limit. All such requests are dealt with promptly and sympathetically.

Disabled People (Housing)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by district council the number of *(a)* owner-occupiers and private tenants and *(b)* council tenants who have applied in each of the last two years for the disabled facilities grant; in each category, by district council, how many adaptations were carried out; what was the average time taken to complete adaptations from the time the request for the adaptations was made; and what was the average amount paid by (i) applicants, (ii) district councils and (iii) central Government.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Disabled facilities grants are not available in Scotland. Grants for adapting dwelling-houses to meet the needs of disabled people are available under the improvement grant system, but the information requested is not held centrally.

Countryside

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any new proposals for protecting the countryside.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 May 1992]:* Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) was set up under the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991 and assumed its full powers and responsibilities on 1 April 1992. SNH's aims are to secure the conservation and enhancement of the natural heritage of Scotland and to foster the

understanding and facilitate the enjoyment of that heritage. Its wide remit and powers will enable it to promote and encourage the sustainable use of Scotland's natural resources. The Government are looking forward shortly to receiving from SNH its draft corporate plan for 1993-96 setting out specific proposals for action.

The 1991 Act provides for the designation by my right hon. Friend, on the advice of SNH, of natural heritage areas. This new designation offers the opportunity to develop integrated strategies for the sustainable management of areas of outstanding value to the natural heritage of Scotland.

Household Waste

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are being taken to meet the target of recycling 25 per cent. of all household waste by the end of the century; and if he will make a statement outlining the present percentage of all household waste that is recycled in Scotland and by how much it has changed since 1990.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 May 1992]:* In Scotland, Government action to meet our recycling targets includes: guidance for local authorities on recycling, including techniques for planning and costing; a requirement that waste disposal authorities give priority to recycling in their waste management planning; a request to waste disposal authorities that they prepare draft recycling plans by August this year; introduction of a system of recycling credits to encourage authorities to pass on to recyclers any savings in disposal costs that they achieve through having waste taken out of the usual disposal route; encouragement to local authorities to make provisions for funding of recycling in their financial planning; joint research with the Department of the Environment and the Department of Trade and Industry on the use of economic instruments to promote recycling; pilot projects in Dundee and Falkirk, promoted by Dundee district council and UK 2000 respectively.

Within the Scottish Office, Ministers and officials increasingly use recycled paper and have encouraged others to do likewise. The percentage of all household waste that is recycled in Scotland was estimated at about 2 per cent. in 1990. The Government are taking steps in collaboration with local authorities to improve information, so that trends can be reliably established.

Fish Directives

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish the regulations to implement EC fish and shellfish hygiene directives together with the associated codes of practice for enforcing agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* We hope to publish two sets of draft regulations to implement the fish and shellfish directives respectively for consultation purposes in June. Draft codes of practice for each directive should also be issued in June.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek to delay the deadline for derogation applications in respect of the EC fish and shellfish hygiene directives by six months to allow time for considered applications to be made.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* No. The EC directives require that any derogations must be granted by 1 January 1993 and, in order to meet this, applications must be received by 1 July 1992. Two months is a reasonable period for applicants to decide from which of the requirements of the directives they will require derogations. Detailed aspects of the planning and execution of any works can then progress up to the end of 1995, if necessary.

HEALTH

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many additional units of secure accommodation for juvenile offenders will be provided in community homes this year *(a)* to meet the current demand and *(b)* to meet the additional demand when section 60 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 comes into effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Secure units may accommodate all children being looked after by local authorities, including those on remand. Two new secure units, providing a total net increase of 14 places to meet current demand, open this year. Plans to meet the additional demand required to implement section 60 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 are being considered by a juvenile remand national steering group.

Health Authorities (Public Meetings)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether district health authorities are required to hold an annual public meeting.

Mr. Sackville: District health authorities (DHAs) are subject to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. All their full meetings must be public whenever they are considering any decisions, unless the Act permits them to hold a meeting in private—for example, because of the confidential nature of the business. DHAs are expected to keep the public informed about their work, aims and objectives. Although there is no specific requirement for an annual meeting, in practice their meetings are held more frequently than annually.

Dentistry

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists, in number and as a percentage of the whole, in England have stopped providing national health service treatment for *(a)* adult patients, *(b)* patients under 18 years and *(c)* all patients, since the introduction of the dentists' latest contract.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected centrally. Since the introduction of the new contract 20·3 million adults and 6·6 million children have registered with national health service dentists. Patient registrations are continuing to increase.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of any schemes currently available to national health service dentists to provide for future investment in computer technology.

Dr. Mawhinney: A one-off payment of £900 is made to dental practices transmitting their claims for payment of

NHS fees by computer to the Dental Practice Board at Eastbourne. This scheme was launched last year, and over 230 payments have been made so far.

Additionally, these and other practice expenses are taken into account by the Dental Rates Study Group when it conducts its annual fee-setting exercise.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps she proposes to take to consult the dental profession about the effect the new contract has had on the practice of dentistry within the national health service;

(2) what assessment she has made of the level of morale of dentists currently working in the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: The principles of the new dental contract are firmly established. For the first time, dentists are encouraged to carry out preventive dentistry, and to provide all-round continuing care. We continue to discuss with the profession ways in which the contract may be improved and several changes have already been made. Over 25 million patients are now registered with dentists in England. This is a true measure of the contract's success. There are currently 27 per cent. more dentists than there were in 1979 and available evidence shows that dentists are taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by the new contract.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will review the system of capitation as a method of remuneration for dental treatment of children with the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have already announced our intention to undertake a fundamental review of the entire dental remuneration system.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has undertaken any surveys of the impact that the introduction of child capitation has had on the number of national health service dentists prepared to treat children.

Dr. Mawhinney: Last September, family health services authorities conducted on our behalf a sample survey of 20 per cent. of dentists on their dental lists. The results of that survey showed that 85 per cent. of dentists are accepting all children for NHS treatment. Precise comparisons with the position prior to the introduction of capitation are difficult, but available information points to approximately the same number of children being treated under both systems.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been made of the number of dentists leaving the national health service; and if she will publish any available findings.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since the introduction of the new dental contract in October 1990, there have been unfounded allegations that large numbers of dentists are leaving the NHS. This is not the case. Very few dentists have resigned from family health services authority lists since October 1990.

There are currently 15,451 dentists providing general dental services in England, 27 per cent. more than in 1979.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the number of dental practices which have gone bankrupt over the last six years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the number of bankruptcies among dentists has been held centrally only since April 1991. Since then, the Dental practice Board (DPB) has received notices of bankruptcy in respect of five dentists. Two of these were in practice together.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details about the new fee structure to be implemented from 1 July, indicating when the notices detailing the change in maximum charges that can be made from 1 April are to be made available to dental practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Dental Rates Study Group recommends what dentists' fees should be. The study group is due to meet shortly, and the new fee scale listing dentists' fees for 1992-93 will be available when it has completed its work. The new scale of fees will not change the present maximum charge. Once the new scale rates have been established, we intend to let dentists have posters for display which will allow them to show both relevant sections from the scale of fees and the current maximum charge.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists were involved in NHS practice for each year since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of dentists practising in the general dental services in England is as shown.

Year to	*Number of Dentists*
30 September 1979	12,146
30 September 1980	12,415
30 September 1981	12,835
30 September 1982	13,258
30 September 1983	13,672
30 September 1984	14,066
30 September 1985	14,334
30 September 1986	14,516
30 September 1987	14,765
30 September 1988	15,070
30 September 1989	15,351
30 September 1990	15,480
30 September 1991	15,451

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have been treated by dentists in the NHS each year since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is collected centrally on the number of courses of treatment provided, rather than the number of people treated. This is set out in the table.

Number of courses of treatment

Year	*All ages*	*Adults*
1979	27,164,610	17,351,250
1980	28,613,630	18,599,830
1981	29,035,190	18,975,130
1982	29,926,290	19,724,540
1983	30,505,470	20,316,210
1984	30,970,830	20,864,560
1985	31,386,100	21,338,100
[1]1986-87	32,103,110	21,961,680
1987-88	32,418,940	22,394,600
1988-89	34,257,830	24,026,520
1989-90	32,746,110	22,809,160
[2]1990-91	N/A	22,559,000
1991-92	N/A	24,273,099

[1] From 1986-87, data were provided by financial year. Prior to this data was provided by calendar year.

[2] Since the introduction of the new contract on 1 October 1990 the figures available relate to adult only courses of treatment. Under the new contract dentists are paid under a capitation system for treating children and courses of treatment for children are no longer counted separately.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what charges were made for NHS dental treatment for each year since 1979 at 1992 prices; and what was the percentage increase or decrease in treatment costs compared with the previous year, for each year since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is shown in the table.

General Dental Services (England)

	Income from charges at 1992-93[1] prices £ million	*Number of courses of adult treatment*	*Cost[2] £*	*Percentage difference*
1979-80	170	17,351,250	239,048,060	—
1980-81	189	18,599,830	313,930,820	31·33
1981-82	215	18,975,130	367,822,590	17·17
1982-83	246	19,724,540	417,283,510	13·45
1983-84	259	20,316,210	453,517,990	8·68
1984-85	272	20,864,560	502,246,300	10·74
1985-86	295	21,338,100	529,015,450	5·33
1986-87	322	21,961,680	595,397,970	12·55
1987-88	332	22,394,600	658,540,620	10·61
1988-89	375	24,026,520	764,593,130	16·10
1989-90	443	22,809,160	759,525,390	−0·66
1990-91	425	22,559,000	838,870,088	10·45
1991-92	421	24,273,099	876,443,488	4·48

Notes:
From 1986-87 data were provided by financial year. Before then data were provided by calendar year.
[1] Using the GDP deflator.
[2] Figures used are actual amounts paid.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out the changes to the financing of NHS dentistry showing net gain or loss to the Exchequer for each year since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is shown in the table.

General Dental Services (England) (Cash £ million)

Years	*Gross Expenditure*	*Income from Charges*	*Net Expenditure*
1979-80	336	70	266
1980-81	419	92	327
1981-82	481	115	366
1982-83	538	141	397
1983-84	584	155	429
1984-85	640	171	469
1985-86	660	196	464
1986-87	742	221	521
1987-88	820	240	580
1988-89	950	291	659
1989-90	948	366	582
1990-91	1,040	380	660
1991-92	1,247	403	[1]844

[1] provisional estimate.

Electorates

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on the basis of the current electoral roll, what is the average number of electors in *(a)* constituencies in England, *(b)* constituencies in Scotland, *(c)* constituencies in Wales and *(d)* constituencies in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Sackville: The average numbers of electors per constituency on the 1992 electoral registers are as follows:

Constituencies in:	*Number*
England	69,534
Wales	58,383
Scotland	54,570
Northern Ireland	67,145

Waiting Lists

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action is being taken to reduce the size of the under-one-year waiting list for the North East Thames regional health authority; and if she will make a statement; (2) if she will publish the waiting list figures for the mid-Essex area for the year up to 31 March, showing the change in the lists for under one year, one to two years, over two years and total change in terms of numbers and as a percentage.

Mr. Sackville: Information on waiting times in individual district health authorities for the year to 31 March 1992 is not yet available centrally. Provisional figures for England as a whole show that, in the year ended 31 March, the number of patients waiting over two years for admission fell by 97 per cent., and the number waiting between one and two years by 33 per cent., while the total number of patients waiting dropped by 3·5 per cent., or over 33,000. North East Thames region reduced the numbers waiting over two years and between one and two years by 89 per cent. and 29 per cent. respectively, while reducing the total number of patients waiting by 7 per cent. or over 5,500. The National Health Service management executive will be discussing targets for 1992-93 with North East Thames, as with all the other regions, including how they intend to use their share of this year's £39 million waiting time fund to further increase the numbers of patients treated from waiting lists. These discussions will also cover the regions' plans for tackling their under-one-year waiting lists.

Eye Tests

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will undertake research to ascertain the long-term implications of introducing charges for eye tests; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is every indication that after an initial drop immediately following restrictions on entitlement to national health service sight tests, the number of tests is now back at 1987 levels. This is confirmed both by surveys carried out by the optical profession and by the increase of 6 per cent. in GP referrals to consultant ophthalmology out-patient clinics during the period 1988 to 1991.

We have no plans to undertake further research.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for sealth if she will publish the latest figures available showing (i) the established savings made to the health budget as a result of introducing a charge for eye tests and (ii) the number of eye tests undertaken for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no charges for national health service sight tests. It is estimated that the

restrictions in entitlement to national health service sight tests to certain priority groups have resulted in savings in the region of £70 million in 1989-90, £90 million in 1990-91 and £100 million in 1991-92 with estimated projected saving of £110 million in 1992-93.

The optical profession conducts regular surveys on the total number of sight tests, both national health service and private. Their findings indicate that the number of sight tests have returned to 1987 levels, the last typical year before the restrictions were announced.

The Department collects information on national health service sights only. The number of sight tests paid for by the national health service in England in the last five years is shown in the table.

England	*Millions*
1986-87	10·6
1987-88	11·7
1988-89	12·5
1989-90	5·3
1990-91	4·2

From April 1989, national health service sight tests were restricted to certain priority groups. The figure for 1989-90 includes 1·6 million sight tests conducted prior to April 1989 under the old regulations but not paid until 1989-90.

GP Fund Holders

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *80*, what detailed assessment has been made of the implications for any given locality of the collective purchasing power of fund-holding general practitioners being greater than that of the purchasing authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: GP fund holders' budgets cover a limited range of hospital services which currently account for around 14 per cent. of total spending per head on the hospital and community health services (HCHS). District health authorities would therefore be responsible for purchasing over 80 per cent. of the HCHS services needed for patients, even in areas where all the GPs were fund holders.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she has issued to either regional health authorities, district health authorities, family health service authorities, or individual general practitioners regarding the establishment and operation of purchasing consortia among fund-holding general practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: No such guidance has been issued. Judgments on how best to discharge their responsibility for purchasing services for their patients are for GP fund holders themselves to take locally.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given to family health service authorities on allocating their budgets to general practitioners; what monitoring his Department undertakes; what weight one year's spending puts on the next year's allocation; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidance on budget setting for GP fund holders is contained in EL(91)36 "General Practice Funding: Financial Matters", a copy of which is in the Library. The responsibility for budget setting lies with regional health authorities, although they may delegate some of this responsibility to family health services authorities. The guidance makes it clear that the main determinant of the budget set is the historical level of activity and spending adjusted, as necessary, to take account of significant changes in patient populations and costs.

Medical Costs

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in the last year for which figures are available in England and Wales what was the average cost to the taxpayer of *(a)* each unit of blood, *(b)* each adult course of dental treatment, *(c)* each child course of dental treatment, *(d)* each patient consultation with a consultant and *(e)* each prescription dispensed.

Dr. Mawhinney: Blood is freely donated by volunteer donors. Handling charges are made to cover the cost incurred by the regional transfusion centres in collecting, processing and supplying the blood to hospitals. In 1991-92, the average handling charge in England for a unit of whole blood was £37·00.

The average net cost of an adult course of dental treatment in England in the year 1991-92 was £19·33[1].

Under the new dental contract introduced on 1 October 1990, general dental practitioners now receive capitation payments for each child registered with them for dental care; numbers of individual courses of treatment are no longer separately recorded. Item of service fees are payable only for some of the more complex treatments.

The cost of a consultation with a consultant is affected by numerous factors such as the type and complexity of the condition being treated, whether in- or out-patient and location. To estimate and use such a figure would therefore be misleading.

The average cost of each prescription dispensed in England in the year 1990-91 was £6·15[2].

Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

[1] Average cost based on item of service fees payable for adult courses of treatment, net of patient charges, but excluding other costs such as continuing care payments payable to general dental practitioners, directly reimbursed practice expenses, and employers' superannuation costs which cannot be attributed to individual adult courses of treatment.

[2] The cost includes the drug element and the dispensing fee and is net of charges.

Tobacco

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health is she will publish the Smee report on the impact on tobacco consumption of an advertising ban.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 15 May at column *214*.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received and what data he has in his possession concerning delays in *(a)* reception of 999 calls at the headquarters of the London ambulance

service, *(b)* dispatch of emergency calls from that headquarters and *(c)* arrival of ambulances at emergency incidents.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 14 May 1992]:* A number of written representations about the performance of the London ambulance service (LAS) have been received over a period of several months. These have concerned delays in answering 999 calls and delays in arriving at emergencies. All the representations are investigated by the LAS and we are satisfied it is acting decisively to remedy the situation by *(a)* modernising the emergency vehicle fleet *(b)* introducing more staff at peak periods and *(c)* building in safeguards to the new computer aided dispatch system.

Table 1 gives activation time figures for the London ambulance service for 1990-91, the latest figures available. The activation time of an ambulance is the time taken from an emergency call being received to a fully equipped vehicle being on the move. The table shows that 66·4 per cent. of calls resulted in an activation time of three minutes or less. The standards in operation for that year were that 95 per cent. of calls should result in an activation time of three minutes or less.

Table 2 gives response time figures. The response time of an ambulance is the time taken from an emergency call to the arrival of a fully equipped vehicle at the place where the patient is. The standards for response times were that 50 per cent. of calls should result in a response within seven minutes, and 95 per cent. within 14 minutes.

It should be noted that in all calculations of percentages the denominator may include calls that did not result in activation and/or response.

PATIENT TRANSPORT SERVICES 1990-91

TABLE 1
Quality of service for London Ambulance Service
Activation time

	Number
Total number of emergency calls	456,695
Number where activation within 3 minutes	303,319
Percentage of calls where activation within 3 minutes	66·4

Source: KA34 DH Statistics Division 2B 1992

TABLE 2
Quality of service for London Ambulance Service
Response times

	Number
Total number of emergency calls	456,695
Number where response within 7 minutes	50,390
Percentage of calls where response within 7 minutes	11·0
Number where response within 14 minutes	336,734
Percentage of calls where response within 14 minutes	73·7

Source: KA34 DH Statistics Division 2B 1992

NHS Trusts

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be her Department's total expenditure on the establishment of NHS trusts in each year since their first introduction to the end of the current financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* A total of £12·7 million in 1990-91 and £26·6 million in 1991-92 was allocated for the first and second wave of trusts. This included developmental costs and a non-recurring revenue addition paid to regions to help cover the cost of public consultation, conveyancing costs and expenditure incurred by trusts during their shadow running period—the period immediately prior to their operational date.

For 1992-93, a total of £34·2 million has been allocated to meet expenditure and conveyancing costs for the third wave.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charters

37. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration he has given to making the various citizens charters legally enforceable.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Certain charter provisions are backed up by legislation. We have, for example, extended the powers of the Audit Commission; we have increased the accountability of local authorities, and increased the powers of the regulators of private utilities.

But the strength of the citizens charter lies in our commitment to consultation with users; published standards of service, and published results.

38. **Mr. Channon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will initiate discussions with the heads of nationalised industries, including British Rail, on implementation of the citizens charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: I fully intend to discuss from time to time the implementation of the citizens charter with the heads of nationalised industries, including Sir Bob Reid —as did my predecessor.

40. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the citizens charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) earlier today.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

39. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will indicate the amount of research undertaken by each of the research councils related to myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The Medical Research Council is funding a study at the Institute of Psychiatry to investigate chronic fatigue syndrome. The Medical Research Council also supports work in immune responses to the muscle, nerve cells and related structures which may have some relevance to the understanding and treatment of this condition, which is also known as myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Science

41. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the president of the Royal Society to discuss the future of science.

Mr. Waldegrave: I had a constructive introductory meeting with the president of the Royal Society on 7 May.

Executive Agencies

42. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil servants now work in "next steps" executive agencies.

Mr. Robert Jackson: There are now more than 290,000 civil servants working in "next steps" agencies and other organisations operating on "next steps" lines. This means that about half the civil service is covered by "next steps". Improved results to the taxpayer and consumer are being delivered.

Science and Technology

43. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on science and technology policy.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 14 May to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), at column *173*.

Medical Research Council

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration he has given to the establishment of a national scientific archive on the Carshalton site of the toxicology research unit of the Medical Research Council.

Mr. Waldegrave: The freehold of the Carshalton site of the Medical Research Council toxicology unit is owned by the Medical Research Council. Its disposal or use for other purposes when the unit moves to Leicester in 1993 is a matter for the council itself.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 19 May 1992

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Treaty on European Union

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the provisions which define the areas of exclusive competence of the European Community, as contained in article 3b of the draft treaty on European union, in the event of that treaty coming into force.

The Attorney-General: The hon. Member asked a question on 20 December 1991 about the exclusive jurisdiction of the European Community to which my right hon. Friend, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office replied on 13 January 1992, at column *438*. The term
"exclusive jurisdiction of the European Community"
in article 3b has now been replaced by
"exclusive competence of the European Community",
in accordance with the usual translation of the French word "competence". The answer to the hon. Member's question about exclusive competence is the same as to his question about exclusive jurisdiction, mutatis mutandis: the European Community has exclusive competence where that is conferred upon it by treaty provision or measures taken under the treaty. Current examples include the common agricultural policy, the common commercial policy and the external tariff.

Rape (Male Victims)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General how many prosecutions have been brought for the rape of a male victim in each year since 1987.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The figures given in the table are for acts of non-consensual buggery.

England and Wales
Buggery by a man with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent.

Offence/Year	*Prosecutions*
1987	19
1988	30
1989	24
1990	25

Attempt by a man to commit buggery with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent

Offence/Year	*Prosecutions*
1987	3
1988	3
1989	2
1990	5

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Tibet (Torture)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the torture of prisoners in Drapchi prison, Tibet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Two members of the British embassy in Peking visited Drapchi prison in July 1991, but were denied access to any prisoners. We cannot, therefore, corroborate allegations of torture there. Regrettably, reports of torture and physical abuse in Tibet are not uncommon. We deplore human rights abuses in Tibet and, indeed, throughout China. We take every opportunity to make our concern over such issues known to the Chinese authorities.

Iraq (Hostages)

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outstanding Kuwaiti hostages held by Iraq.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs made clear at the meeting of the EC-Gulf Co-operation Council in Kuwait on 16 May, we are maintaining pressure on Iraq to fulfil all its obligations under United Nations Security Council resolutions, including the return of missing Kuwaiti and other nationals.

We fully support Kuwait's efforts through the International Committee of the Red Cross to establish the whereabouts of its missing citizens, of which some 800 are believed to be in Iraq. We raise this question at each Security Council review of sanctions and will continue to do so until all Iraq's obligations are met.

Jersey

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the applicability of the United Kingdom's international obligations under international human rights conventions to Jersey.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: International human rights conventions are extended to Jersey as and when requested by the Jersey authorities.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the effect of the United States national security directive No. 26 on United Kingdom relations with Iraq in trade and technology assistance up to August 1990.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

None. The directive referred to was an internal US Administration document, and I understand that is was concerned solely with US policy towards Iraq and the Gulf.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he intends to introduce primary legislation to establish internal trading accounts within local authorities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he intends to publish the Government's final proposals following the publication of "Competing for Quality—Competition in the Provision of Local Services"; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will publish a list of those local authority white collar services he intends to subject to compulsory competitive tendering, giving details of deadlines for competition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: A list of those who responded to the consultation paper has been deposited in the House library, and copies of the responses have been placed in the library of my Department.

The Government intend to bring forward in the autumn regulations and guidance under section 9 of the Local Government Act 1992 to secure a clearer framework for compulsory competitive tendering. Announcements will be made in due course about the proposals for extending the list of activities subject to the compulsory competition provisions of the Local Government Act 1988, and on the timetable for implementation.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends that the register of contaminated land should include reference to sites subject to clay pigeon shooting.

Mr. Maclean: The duty envisaged under section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 is for local authorities to compile registers of land which may be contaminated, in accordance with regulations. The regulations will specify contaminative uses of land. Consideration has been given to the inclusion of any use of land which results in its being contaminated with lead, including land used for clay pigeon shooting. However, implementation of section 143 has been delayed to enable further consideration to be given to the detail of the proposals and further consultation to be undertaken.

Sustainable Living

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to encourage the establishment of a worldwide organisation to monitor the implementation of sustainable living and to prevent serious breaches in securing this goal.

Mr. Maclean: I will be working at the Earth summit to promote international arrangements for the effective follow-up of the agreements reached in Rio, building as far as possible on existing institutional arrangements.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his Department's definition of the concepts of *(a)* sustainable growth, *(b)* sustainable use and *(c)* sustainable development.

Mr. Maclean: Paragraphs 1.14 and 4.4 of the White Paper "This Common Inheritance", Cm 1200, contain definitions of sustainable development. Paragraph 1.5 of the same White Paper deals with the need to integrate economic growth within these principles. The definitions of sustainable development embody a definition of sustainable use.

Environment Agency

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish plans for an environment agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We are currently examining the results of our recent consultation exercise and will announce our plans for the environment agency as soon as possible.

Disabled Facilities Grant

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department plan to announce the outcome of the recent review of the disabled facilities grant system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The findings of the review of the house renovation grant system, including disablement facilities grants, are currently under consideration. We hope to make an announcement shortly.

Radioactive Substances

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the two reportable radiological incidents that occurred in April at Sellafield involving the release of radioactive liquid in the former case and radioactive gases in the latter.

Mr. Maclean: British Nuclear Fuels plc reported two incidents to my Department that occurred in April at Sellafield, neither of which involved a release of radioactivity to the environment.

Mundic Mining Soil

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent meetings his Department has had with building societies regarding the effect on property development of concrete contaminated by mundic mining soil.

Mr. Baldry: Officials from my Department met representatives of the building societies and of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors on 6 April 1992 to discuss problems arising with houses constructed from mundic concrete.

Environmental Management Systems

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution his Department made to the development of the British Standards Institute BS-7750 on environmental management systems; and whether he has any plans to promote the standard at the next European Council as part of harmonisation procedures for the single European market.

Mr. Maclean: Officials from my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry have liaised closely with the British Standards Institute on the development of BS 7750, in particular to ensure its compatibility with the EC ecu-audit proposals.

Compliance with the standard is voluntary. I therefore have no plans to promote it at the Environment Council as part of the harmonisation procedures for the single European market. But as it is the first of its kind in the world, I would anticipate that it will be a benchmark for the development of future European and international standards.

Toxic Chemicals

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures exist to prohibit the illicit discharge of toxic chemicals with explosive gas generating potential from factories or workshops into the sewerage system.

Mr. Maclean: Under the Water Industry Act 1991 it is for sewerage undertakers, and, in the case of special category effluent, for the Secretary of State, to consent to discharges of trade effluent to sewers and to set appropriate consent conditions. These are designed to prohibit substances which by themselves, or in reaction with other substances, may give rise to explosive gases or vapours in the sewerage system.

Disabled People (Housing)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he intends to make to the report by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation on disabled people's housing entitled "Housing: a Question of Influence".

Sir George Young: The report and its recommendations provide a helpful contribution to the debate on the provision of housing for disabled people. My Department has commissioned a major programme of research into the housing needs of elderly and disabled people which is due to be completed in September this year. The issues raised by RADAR's report will be considered in the light of the results of this research.

Housing and Disability Group

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide funding for the establishment of a national housing and disability group.

Sir George Young: The Department has considered this idea previously. We are not convinced that such an organisation is necessary. The Access Committee for England, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation and the Disabled Persons Housing Service are already active in this area.

Water Pollution

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the number of *(a)* big water pollution incidents and *(b)* other water pollution incidents, in each year since 1981, showing the proportion of these caused by (i) oil and (ii) sewage and the proportion in each case caused by farmers;

(2) if he will list, by area, the number of *(a)* big water pollution incidents and *(b)* other water pollution incidents caused by farmers in each year since 1981;

(3) if he will list the number of *(a)* big water pollution incidents and *(b)* other water pollution incidents, in each year since 1981 showing the percentage of these caused by farmers.

Mr. Maclean: Detailed information in this form is not held centrally by my Department or by the National Rivers Authority. The latest information available relating to pollution incidents is that published in the NRA's report "Water Pollution Incidents in England and Wales 1990".

Waste

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent he is encouraging the waste disposal industry to incinerate waste rather than to landfill.

Mr. Maclean: Both landfill and incineration have important roles to play as methods of waste disposal. What is appropriate in any area will depend on the particular circumstances, and type of waste to be disposed of. The Secretary of State is currently drawing up a planning policy guidance note on planning and pollution control, which will give advice to local authorities on the criteria they should apply in considering planning applications for waste disposal facilities, and in drawing up their development plans.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made towards achieving the Government's targets for recycling of household waste; and how these targets will be affected by current EC proposals.

Mr. Maclean: Since the Government set their target of recycling half of all recyclable household waste by the year 2000, we have introduced a range of measures to promote recycling, including a requirement on waste collection authorities to produce recycling plans; and the introduction of the recycling credits scheme on 1 April this year. There has been progress in a number of materials sectors, including the following.

Aluminium can recycling has increased from 5 per cent. in 1990 to 11 per cent in 1991; the industry has set itself a target of recycling 50 per cent of aluminium cans by 1995.

The number of glass banks has increased from 5,800 in 1990 to 7,155 in 1991; the industry has set itself a target of 10,000 banks by 1995.

The number of save-a-can banks—which accept steel and aluminium cans—has increased from 200 in 1990 to about 625 in 1991; the industry has set a target of 1,000 save-a-can banks by 1994.

As part of an agreement with the Government, the newspaper publishers recently published figures showing that 27 per cent. of newsprint used in their publications in 1990 was made from waste paper. Figures for 1991 are not yet available. The publishers have agreed to a target of 40 per cent. recycled newsprint by the year 2000.

The Government are developing a national household waste analysis project, the first results of which will be available later this year. Together with a new survey of local authority waste collection and disposal practices being produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, that should provide more precise information to measure progress towards the Government's target.

The European Commission has not yet finalised its proposal for a directive on packaging and packaging waste. It is therefore premature to speculate on the relationship between this or other measures and the Government's recycling target.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the final report of the study commissioned by his Department and the DTI on economic instruments to encourage the recovery of resources from waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department and the Department of Trade and Industry have commissioned a study of economic instruments to inform the development of our policy on the recovery of resources from waste. The study has been commissioned because the Government believe that environmental policies should be soundly based, making use of the best available information. A draft of the final report is expected shortly.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the Government's target for energy recovery from used packaging.

Mr. Maclean: The Government have no plans to introduce a target for energy recovery specifically from used packaging.

The Government are considering a range of possible targets for energy recovery from household waste. Decisions on them will be taken in the context of the Government's wider review of their renewable energy strategy.

Office of Water Services

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers the Director General of Water Services has to restrain price increases in water bills; and if he will make a statement on the progress the Office of Water Services has made so far as a regulator.

Mr. Maclean: Water companies are not permitted to increase the tarriff basket, which includes the bulk of water and sewerage charges, each year by more in total than the increase in the retail price index plus a K factor specified for each company. K factors were set initially by the Secretaries of State; the director general is now making preparation to set revised K factors for the period beginning in April 1995. An interim determination of K can also be made for an individual company if there has been a material change of circumstances.

From April 1992 most companies agreed to increase their charge by less than RPI + K, so saving customers an average of 1 per cent. or a total of £40 million in 1992-93.

Water Bills

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the real terms and percentage increases made in water bills for each privatised water company since privatisation occurred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The annual increases in charges for each water supply and water and sewerage company are contained in the OFWAT leaflets "Water and Sewerage Bills 1991/92" and "Water and Sewerage Bills 1992/93", copies of which I have placed in the Library, together with a list of the increases in 1990-91.

Acid Rain

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will now make available maps showing the sensitivity of fresh waters in Great Britain to acid rain damage and the present and prospective extent of the areas liable to damage.

Mr. Maclean: I am issuing today a report to my Department by the United Kingdom critical loads advisory group entitled "Critical and Target Loads Maps for Freshwaters in Great Britain". This complements earlier work by the group on the sensitivity of soils in Great Britain, and supersedes earlier provisional maps relating to freshwaters in Scotland. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

This work will help to inform the consideration of policy on acid rain in the United Kingdom and the preparation of a new agreement in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on the abatement of sulphur dioxide.

Strontium-90 and Caesium-137

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has undertaken or sponsored any research into the mutagenic effects of strontium-90 and caesium-137.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 14 May 1992]:* This Department has not undertaken or sponsored research into the mutagenic effects of radionuclides, as this lies outside our responsibilities.

Part B Processes

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many part B processes have applied for authorisation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and how many of these have applied for and been granted commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* Provisional figures up to the end of December 1991 show that 2,809 applications for authorisation had been made to local authorities. The Department does not collect information on requests for commercial confidentiality.

Opencast Coal

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to initiate a new review of the planning guidelines on opencast coal mining.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* The current guidelines are contained in minerals planning guidance note 3—MPG3—published in 1988. As part of a monitoring exercise on the effectiveness of the guidelines, my Department has recently completed a wide ranging consultation exercise on their practical operation. I shall consider whether there is any need for revision of MPG3 in the light of that.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Chronic Fatigue

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to receive a final report from the Medical Research Council concerning the findings of the research study by the Institute of Psychiatry which is investigating chronic fatigue.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Medical Research Council annually submits to Ministers a report on the exercise of its functions which is laid before the House, but reports to Ministers on individual projects or programmes funded from the science budget are not normally expected. None is expected on the Institute of Psychiatry study of chronic fatigue syndrome. I understand that the study is due to be completed at the end of March next year and that the findings will in due course be published.

Citizens Charters

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he plans to introduce any new citizens charters.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* The Citizen's Charter White Paper (Cm 1599) includes a commitment to publish a charter for London Underground customers. This will be published shortly.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will revise the elements of the retail prices index to eliminate the effect of movement in mortgage rates.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have now decided to ask the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee to review the treatment of owner-occupiers' housing costs in the retail prices index. The terms of reference for this committee are being amended accordingly and will now be as follows:

"To advise the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the implication for the RPI of the abolition of the community charge and its replacement by the council tax; to review progress on implementing the Committee's previous recommendation on the inclusion in the index of expenditure on holidays; and to review the present treatment in the index of owner-occupiers' housing costs and new cars. In framing its recommendations the Committee is asked to take account of the practices in other European Community countries."

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the realignments in the exchange rate mechanism since it was established together with the percentage change in each currency changed at the time; and what representations have been made to him for a new realignment.

Mr. Nelson: The table lists the ERM percentage realignments that have taken place.

Chronology of central rate changes within the EMS entry into effect of the EMS

	per cent.
1979	
13 March	
23 September	
Deutschemark	+2·00
Krone	−2·90
30 November	
Krone	−4·76
1981	
22 March	
4 October	
Lire	−6·00
Deutschemark, Guilder	+5·50
French Franc, Lire	−3·00
1982	
21 February	
Belgian/Luxembourg Francs	−8·50
Krone	−3·00
12 June	
Deutschemark/Guilder	+4·25
Lire	−2·75
French Franc	−5·75
1983	
21 March	
Deutschemark	+5·50
Guilder	+3·50
Krone	+2·50
Belgian/Luxembourg Francs	+1·50
French Franc/Lire	−2·50
Punt	−3·50
1985	
20 July	
Belgian Franc, Krone, Deutschemark, French Franc, Punt, Luxembourg Franc, Guilder	+2·00
Lire	−6·00
1986	
7 April	
Deutschemark	+3·00
Guilder	+3·00
Belgian/Luxembourg Francs	+1·00
Krone	+1·00
French Franc	−3·00
2 August	
Punt	−8·00
1987	
12 January	
Deutschemark	+3·00
Guilder	+3·00
Belgian/Luxembourg Francs	+2·00
1990	
8 January — When the Lire moved from ±6 per cent. margin of fluctuation to ±2¼ per cent.	
Lire	−3·75

Note: The net change in a particular central rate is approximately equal to the difference in the percentage changes shown against the two currencies concerned. For example in March 1983 the Deutschemark was revalued by 2 per cent. against the Guilder and 9 per cent. against the Punt.

My right hon. Friend has received several such representations.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rate of interest was credited to the premium bond prize pool each month in 1989, 1990, 1991, and 1992.

Mr. Nelson: The rate has remained unchanged at 6·5 per annum since July 1988.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will initiate a departmental investigation into the commercial sales by the now defunct Allivane Company of Cumbernauld, Glasgow, of artillery fuses to Iraq in contravention of the export control restrictions;

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the sale of militarily sensitive materials to Iraq by the Aero Technologies Company of Glasgow;

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the commercial sales agreements between the Allivane Company of Cumbernauld, Glasgow, and the Space Research Corporation of Belgium in regard to provision of militarily useful materials to Iraq.

Sir John Cope: Investigation and related assessment of possible export licensing offences are matters for the Commissioners of Customs and Excise. They carry out their inquiries thoroughly and expeditiously. It would not be appropriate for information relating to any particular investigation or related assessment to be made public other than in the course of court proceedings.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what categories of information requested by the Customs and Excise authorities from Government departments relating to the illegal commercial dealing by British-based or owned companies and Iraq, either directly or indirectly, have not been supplied to those authorities; and what are the reasons in each case.

Sir John Cope: There is frequent liaison between Customs and Excise and other Government Departments about exports from the United Kingdom to Iraq and, indeed, other countries. The nature of any information requested by or passed to Customs for the conduct of their statutory enforcement responsibilities is clearly a matter of investigative and commercial confidentiality and I can give no details.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make proposals to the European Commission to substantially raise the tax threshold of VAT for small businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The Government support the Commission's proposal for a VAT directive for small and medium-sized enterprises. However, the Government would wish to see a significant increase in the optional higher threshold which, as currently proposed, is below the United Kingdom threshold, which is the highest in the EC.

Bank of Credit and Finance International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to publish the Bingham report.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 14 May 1992]:* Lord Justice Bingham will report as soon as he is ready. The Prime Minister has assured the House on 22 July 1991, *Official Report*, column 757, that the conclusions will be made public and the Chancellor has also stated on 19 July 1991, *Official Report*, column 721, that as much as possible of the report should be published.

Clearing Banks

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many branches of clearing banks there are in the United Kingdom *(a)* at present and *(b)* in 1972, 1977, 1982 and 1987.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* The latest figures available are for the end of 1991, at which time there were 13,035 branches of clearing banks in the United Kingdom. The figures for the previous years are:

	Number
End 1972	13,414
End 1977	13,179
End 1982	15,333
End 1987	14,480

The banks included in these figures are: Natwest, Lloyds, Midland, Barclays, Royal Bank of Scotland, Bank of Scotland and Clydesdale—all years—and Yorkshire, TSB, Co-op and Abbey National, from 1982 onwards.

WALES

Cystic Fibrosis Centre

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to establish and fund a recognised Welsh cystic fibrosis centre to cater for the current and future treatment of the patients who presently attend clinics in Heath and Llandough hospitals.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1986-87 and 1988-89, funds were made available to the University hospital of Wales and Llandough hospital under the centrally funded developments programme to employ medical staff engaged in the treatment of patients with cystic fibrosis. These funds have since been built-in to South Glamorgan health authority's recurrent revenue allocation.

Since the introduction of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 responsibility for the continued provision of such services rests with providing units in consultation with health authorities and trusts. Funding is allocated to health authorities to enable them to purchase appropriate levels of service for their residents in accordance with their local strategies and priorities.

Rented Housing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the number of houses purchased by housing associations for rehabilitation and letting for rent in Wales in 1979, 1987 and 1991.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not separately available for Wales prior to 1 April 1989. In 1991-92 housing associations in Wales purchased 288 dwellings for rehabilitation and 93 for letting for rent.
Source: Housing for Wales.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the average rent of local authority-owned housing in Wales in 1987; and what are the average rents of local authority housing currently in Blaenau Gwent;

(2) what was the average rent of local authority-owned housing in Blaenau Gwent in 1987; and what are the average rents of local authority housing currently in Blaenau Gwent.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The average weekly rent in 1987 of local authority owned housing in Wales and Blaenau Gwent as reported by CIPFA was £17·91 and £22·14 respectively. In 1992-93 the average weekly rent reported by the borough of Blaenau Gwent is £30·77.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are on the waiting list of local authorities and housing associations for rented homes in Wales currently; and what were the figures for 1979 and 1987.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not centrally available.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many homes for rent built by the local authority in Blaenau Gwent were occupied in 1979, 1987 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The readily available information requested is given in the table:

Local authority occupied dwellings at 1 April

	Blaenau Gwent
1987	10,871
1991	9,774

Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

The numbers of vacant dwellings are not readily available prior to 1 April 1982.

Job Losses

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the totals of jobs lost to Wales from Inmos at Newport, Parke Davis, Pontypool, and the London Rubber Company, Llanelli, and potential and real jobs lost at Cwmbran following the decision of the Renishaw company not to locate in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I am aware of the following company announcements of job losses in Wales—220 at Parke Davis, March 1992; 300 at London International, September 1991; and 16 at Renishaw, April 1992. The Welsh Office is currently in discussion with Inmos regarding its announcement in March of the planned closure of its Newport plant with the potential loss of 450 jobs.

Dentistry

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to ensure national health service treatment is available in their community for those dental patients whose dentists have ended national health service dental treatment.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The community dental service is obliged to provide a safety net for patients who are unable to obtain treatment under the general dental services. It is for the district health authorities, in consultation with family health services authorities, to determine what services community dental services provide.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many dentists in Dyfed have since April 1991 *(a)* ceased treating all patients, *(b)* ceased providing national health service treatment for adult patients, *(c)* ceased providing national health service treatment for all their patients and *(d)* opened new practices;

(2) how many dentists in Wales, in numbers and as a percentage of the whole, have stopped providing national health service dental treatment for *(a)* adult patients, *(b)* patients under 18 years and *(c)* all patients since April 1991;

(3) how many dentists in Wales have given notice to their family health services authorities that they wish to end providing national health service dental treatment to *(a)* adult patients, *(b)* patients under 18 years and *(c)* all patients.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available in the form requested. The majority of dentists are continuing to provide NHS treatment for all patients. Nearly one and a half million patients were registered with dentists in Wales as at 31 March 1992. In the first year of the new contract there was a net decrease of five dentists practising in the general dental service in Wales.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will instruct family health services authorities in Wales to negotiate contracts with health trusts and directly managed community health service units to provide national health service dental treatment in areas where it is not available locally from independent contract dentists;

(2) if he will fund family health service authorities to purchase national health service dental care from health trusts and directly managed community health service units to provide national health service dental treatment in those areas where national health service treatment is not available from independent contracting dentists.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The powers of the family health services authorities to administer general dental services are set out within the terms of the NHS Act 1977 and these proposals appear to fall outside the scope of the Act.

Elderly People (Housing)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses were specifically built for the elderly by local authorities and housing associations in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Blaenau Gwent in 1979, 1987 and 1991.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of dwellings specifically built for the elderly are given in the table. 1979 information is not centrally available.

	Blaenau Gwent	*Wales*
1987		
Local Authority	25	438
Housing Association	35	238
1991		
Local Authority	2	131
Housing Association	104	345

Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

Further Education

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each technical and further education college in Wales the numbers of students obtaining an ordinary national diploma, a higher national diploma or a B.Tech. qualification during the last academic year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Figures for students obtaining an ordinary national diploma are not collected centrally. The

numbers of students obtaining a B.Tech higher national diploma during the 1990-91 academic year are listed in the table:

Number of B.Tech Higher National Diploma passes[1]

College	*Number*
North East Wales Institute	238
Llandrillo Technical College	21
Carmarthen College of Technology and Art	50
Welsh Agricultural College	8
Gwent College of Higher Education	121
The Polytechnic of Wales	308
Cardiff Institute of Higher Education	255
Swansea Institute of Higher Education	244
Total for Wales	1,245

[1]Includes distinctions.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the further education and technical colleges which will be funded by the new funding council, indicating *(a)* the number of students in each college enrolled in September 1991 and *(b)* the capital and current expenditure of each college during the last financial year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on capital and current expenditure for further education is not held centrally. Reliable data for student enrolments are not yet available for 1991. The total number of students enrolled at November 1990 in further education and technical colleges are listed in the table. The figures include both further education and higher education enrolments. The Further Education Funding Council for Wales will determine only the number of further education enrolments to be funded from the 1 April 1993.

Number of enrolments at November 1990

College	*Number*
Clwyd	
North East Wales Institute	8,923
Llandrillo Technical College	5,633
Welsh College of Horticulture	288
Llysfasi College of Agriculture	367
Dyfed	
Carmarthen College of Technology and Art	4,214
Pembrokeshire College of Further Education	2,411
Ceredigion College of Further Education	1,740
Welsh Agricultural College	207
Gwent	
Newport College of Further Education	4,395
Crosskeys College	3,740
Pontypool College	3,157
Ebbw Vale College of Further Education	1,613
Usk Agricultural College	395
Gwynedd	
Gwynedd Technical College	3,247
Coleg Pencraig	1,018
Coleg Meirionydd	996
Coleg Glynllifon	109
Mid Glamorgan	
Merthyr Tydfil College	2,434
Aberdare College	1,515
Bridgend College	4,331
Rhondda College	1,782
Ystrad Mynach College	2,588
Pontypridd College	4,003
Pencoed College	593
Powys	
Coleg Powys	3,889
South Glamorgan	
Coleg Glan Hafren	4,902
Barry College of Further Education	2,875
West Glamorgan	
Swansea College	6,249
Gorseinon College	2,394
Neath College	4,451
Afan College	2,339
TOTAL	86,798

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each technical and further education college in Wales how many students obtained A levels with grades A to C during the last academic year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is not held centrally.

Health Service Fees

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales why the AG1 forms for patients claiming part or full remission of health service fees are not available; and when they will be.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Forms AG1 are supplied to family health services authorities in Wales which are responsible for its distribution to the general ophthalmic, dental and medical services. Adequate stocks are maintained centrally to meet all orders for these forms.

The form has recently been revised and the new version has been issued to all FHSAs in Wales.

Gipsy Sites

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many official gipsy sites there are in each of the counties of Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is given in the table:

Official gipsy sites

County	*Number*
Clwyd	1
Dyfed	6
Gwent	2
Gwynedd	1
Mid Glamorgan	1
Powys	1
South Glamorgan	2
West Glamorgan	3
Total	17

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of official gipsy sites proposed by each of the counties of Wales; and what are their locations.

Mr. David Hunt: Proposals currently notified to me by county councils are as follows:

Clwyd

Two residential sites, at Queensferry and Wrexham
Six transit sites—not yet specified.

Powys

Two transit sites—Brecknock and Radnor areas.

West Glamorgan

Two residential sites at Caegarw, Margam and Fairwood Common, Gower.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policies concerning gipsy sites.

Mr. David Hunt: My policy is to encourage local authorities to meet their existing obligations under the Caravan Sites Act 1968. The Government have undertaken to review the current legislation and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I hope to issue soon a public consultation paper.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit the gipsy sites proposed by Clwyd county council.

Mr. David Hunt: The location of gipsy sites is a matter for the county council, in consultation with the district councils. In view of my statutory responsibilities under the Caravan Sites and Planning Acts regarding proposals which are opposed by the local authorities, it would not be appropriate for me to visit the sites proposed by Clwyd county council.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Television Licence Fees

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received over pensioners paying the full television licence fee while others in the same housing complex pay the concessionary sum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 14 May 1992]:* We have received no correspondence on this subject since the general election. As I indicated in reply to a question by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on 14 May, *Official Report*, columns *172-73*, my right hon. and learned Friend and I have no plans to change the present concessionary arrangements.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Service Personnel

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the United Kingdom benefits which are not available to the wives and families of British service men overseas; and if he will bring forward proposals to provide an equivalent level of social security for those wives and families.

Miss Widdecombe: The only benefits not available are income support and disability working allowance. We have no plans to change the present arrangements.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his estimate of the cost of extending eligibility for severe disability premium by disregarding any non-dependant in receipt of either mobility component of disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will extend the criteria for eligibility for severe disability premium as recommended by the social security advisory committee in its eighth report; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is his estimate of the cost of extending the criteria for eligibility for severe disability premium as recommended by the social security advisory committee in its eighth report; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what is his estimate of the cost of extending eligibility for severe disability premium by disregarding any non-dependant in receipt of the lower care component of disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what is his estimate of the cost of extending eligibility for severe disability premium by disregarding any non-dependant who is registered blind; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what is his estimate of the cost of extending eligibility for severe disability premium by disregarding any non-dependant over the age of 75 years; and if he will make a statement;

(7) what is his estimate of the cost of extending eligibility for severe disability premium by disregarding any non-dependant in receipt of severe disablement allowance; and if he will make a statement;

(8) what is his estimate of the cost of extending eligibility for severe disability premium by disregarding any non-dependant in receipt of invalidity benefit, or who was in receipt of invalidity benefit, immediately prior to becoming eligible for retirement pension; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: We have always made it plain that we intended the severe disability premium to be payable to people on income-related benefits, getting attendance allowance—or the middle or upper rate care component of disability living allowance—who live independently with no one receiving invalid care allowance for looking after them. Nonetheless, the committee has produced a carefully balanced set of proposals for extension of the premium. These proposals merit serious consideration, which they will receive, although I can give the right hon. Member no assurances about the outcome of our deliberations.

The estimated cost of extending eligibility to the premium as recommended by the committee is in the order of £25 million to £30 million.

The estimated costs of extending eligibility by disregarding each of the specified groups of non-dependants are shown in the table.

Non-dependants to be disregarded	*Estimated cost £ million*
Those in receipt of either rate of mobility component of disability allowance	2
Those in receipt of lower care component of disability living allowance	1
Those registered blind	less than 1
Those over the age of 75	15 to 20
Those in receipt of severe disablement allowance	2
Those in receipt of invalidity benefit	4
Those who have been in receipt of invalidity benefit immediately prior to becoming eligible for retirement pension	[1]—

Note: All costs are in 1991-92 prices.
[1] No reliable information on which to base an estimate

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made regarding the impact of disability living allowance on income of sufferers from myalgic encephalomyelitis who were previously in receipt of mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: People receiving mobility allowance were transferred automatically to the higher rate of the mobility component of disability living allowance. If they were not already receiving attendance allowance they were invited also to claim either the care component of disability living allowance or, if over 65, attendance allowance.

Like attendance allowance and mobility allowance, disability living allowance is awarded with regard to a person's care or mobility needs, not on the basis of a aparticular medical condition.

TRANSPORT

Privatisation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish proposals for the privatisation of local authority ports, airports and public transport companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Government's intention to privatise the remaining local authority bus companies and to encourage local authorities to sell their airports was set out in the Conservative party's manifesto for the recent general election.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a timetable for the privatisation of local authority ports, airports and public transport companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: No. This will depend on the circumstances of individual undertakings.

Statistics Bulletins

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review his decision to charge hon. Members for his Department's statistics bulletins.

Mr. Norris: Copies of all the Department's statistics bulletins are available in the Library for reference. If an hon. Member requires a specific publication for more detailed work, on application to the statistics directorate of my Department, a copy will be provided free of charge.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many properties British Rail has bought along the safeguarded route for the channel tunnel rail link since 1 April 1991; how many have been sold; how many let; and how many are vacant.

Mr. Freeman: I understand from British Rail that, along the safeguarded route for the rail link, it has since 1 April 1991 bought 79 properties; sold two and let 43. Thirty-four properties are at present unoccupied, of which 22 have been identified as suitable for sale as and when market conditions are appropriate.

A20

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current progress of the new A20 road between Dover and Folkestone.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The A20 Folkestone-Dover scheme is being constructed in three contract lengths. They are all expected to be completed by summer 1993.

British Rail

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to employ as accountancy or auditing firms in relation to the privatisation of British Rail only such firms as have not been subject to criticism in reports from Department of Trade and Industry inspectors.

Mr. Freeman: When making such appointments, we take account of all relevant considerations and make such inquiries as are appropriate to establish the competence of the firm concerned.

London Coaches

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has now given his approval to the sale of London Coaches; who won the bid; and if he will make a full statement.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend gave his consent to the sale by London Buses Ltd. of London Coaches Ltd. to a management buy-out team on 11 May.

Tilbury

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what factors were included in the valuation of the port of Tilbury.

Mr. Norris: The valuation was based on a three-year projection of the operations of the port of Tilbury and an analysis of quoted companies and of recent corporate transactions involving ports.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who conducted the valuation of the port of Tilbury prior to its sale.

Mr. Norris: The valuation was made for the board of the Port of London Authority by S. G. Warburg and Co. Ltd.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what infrastructure and capital works including new buildings and roads were constructed, and at what cost during the five years prior to the sale of the port of Tilbury.

Mr. Norris: This is a commercial matter for the Port of London Authority, but there is relevant information in the annual reports which are laid before Parliament. Those for 1986-90 were placed in the Library of the House. The 1991 report will be published shortly.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who is responsible for paying the legal fees of the management side in the various industrial tribunal and employment appeal tribunals' cases which commenced prior to the sale of the port of Tilbury and continue after the sale.

Mr. Norris: Costs arising from the abolition of the dock labour scheme, including those associated with the industrial tribunal, have been entered as extraordinary items, separate from the operational expenditure of the Tilbury and other divisions, in the accounts of the Port of London Authority. Any further liabilities in this connection, following the sale of the port of Tilbury, remain with the authority.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what input his Department has made to Her Majesty's Government's proposals for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June.

Mr. MacGregor: My Department has played a full part in determining the Government's position during the preparations for the conference.

Road Freight

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on current Government policy concerning the redistribution of road freight to rail.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We continue to support BR participation in joint ventures with the private sector, to back investment in BR's new channel tunnel services, and to encourage companies to take advantage of the recently improved criteria for freight facilities grants.

We intend to liberalise access to the rail network and return BR's freight businesses to the private sector as soon as practicable, in order to widen customer choice and further encourage rail freight.

School Buses

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the number of school buses involved in road accidents in Great Britain for each year since 1979;

(2) if he will list the number and severity of injuries relating to road accidents involving school buses for each year since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I regret that the information is not available. The standard report form on which police collect information on road injury accidents records the type of vehicles involved, but not the use to which they were put to at the time of accident.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average child-to-seat ratio for peak period school buses in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information requested is not available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Development Aid

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of overseas development aid is currently spent on *(a)* science and technology usage and *(b)* education and training programmes.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We do not record aggregate expenditure on science and technology as such, but the application of new scientific and technological developments to developing country problems through the research and development programmes which ODA supports accounts for approximately 4 per cent. of our total gross aid programme. Support for education and training programmes accounts for approximately 8 per cent. of the gross aid programme, excluding training activities carried out by the multilateral agencies which cannot be identified.

Kurdistan

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to Kurdistan to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 6 to 10 July 1992.

Aid

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money was spent by the Overseas Development Administration on monitoring and evaluation of aid projects for each year from 1985 to date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Expenditure on ex-post project evaluation, which is the responsibility of the ODA's evaluation department, has been as follows:

	£'000
1985	222
1986	399
1987	269
1988	608
1989	456
1990	426
1991	580

Expenditure on monitoring is the responsibility of the ODA's operational departments managing the projects concerned, and is not recorded separately in the ODA's expenditure records. Details of monitoring expenditure could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* the amount of overseas aid in the form of grants and *(b)* the amount of overseas aid in the form of loans to be (i) directed towards Africa and (ii) directed towards eastern Europe; what were the corresponding figures for each of the past three years; and by how much these figures are to be increased over the next financial year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* The information is as follows:

£ thousand

Bilateral aid to Africa	*Total aid expenditure*	*of which Grants*	*Loans*
1988-89	328,949	326,738	2,211
1989-90	371,949	369,209	2,740
1990-91	418,374	417,248	1,126

Bilateral aid to Africa	Total aid expenditure	of which Grants	Loans
Bilateral assistance to central and eastern Europe			
1988-89	—	—	—
1989-90	[1]63,769	[1]63,769	—
1990-91	16,784	16,784	—

[1]Includes £61·7 million payment to Polish stabilisation fund.

Figures for bilateral aid to Africa in 1991-92 are not yet available on this basis. Estimated expenditure in central and eastern Europe, including the former Soviet Union, in 1991-92 is £52 million, which includes know-how and emergency relief supplies for Russia. This and the amounts for Africa exclude the substantial assistance we provide through the EC and other multilateral bodies.

The overall public expenditure provisions for 1992-93 for aid to developing countries and assistance to central and eastern Europe, including the former Soviet Union, are set out in the FCO/ODA "Departmental Report 1992", Cm 1902. Copies can be found in the Libraries of the House.

Africa (Drought)

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what extra measures Her Majesty's Government are taking to help to relieve the effects of the drought in central and southern Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has announced two packages of aid, on 4 March and 29 April, totalling £30 million. These include food, balance of payments aid, technical assistance and support for the activities of the voluntary agencies. In addition, Britain will be paying around £27·5 million towards the cost of the recently approved European Community special food aid programme which will provide an additional 800,000 tonnes of food aid, mostly for Africa.

Brazilian Rain Forest

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in discussions with Brazilian authorities with regard to providing further support for Brazilian research on rain forest problems.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since signing a Memorandum of Understanding on environmental co-operation with the Government of Brazil in July 1989, under which we are supporting a range of research activities in forest management in the Amazon, we have discussed with the Brazilian authorities and have approved a total of nine forestry projects for which we are providing £11·5 million. Additional project proposals are under discussion. We are also contributing £1·5 million to the core fund of the pilot programme for the conservation of the Brazilian rain forests, to be managed by the World bank in liaison with the European Commission.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sexual Crime

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will lay down guidelines for the counselling and care of male victims of rape and other serious sexual assaults; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. The police have been issued with guidance on the reception and treatment of victims of rape. While there is a presumption that most victims of sexual offences will be female, I am confident that the principles set out in the guidance will be observed regardless of the victim's gender.

Overseas Voters

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list for each parliamentary constituency in the United Kingdom the number of registered overseas voters and their countries of residence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of overseas voters included in the electoral register for each parliamentary constituency will be published in the summer by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in the annual reference volume "Electoral Statistics 1992", series EL 19. However, prior to the publication, details of the figures have been placed in the Library. Information on the country of residence of overseas electors is not held centrally.

Judith Ward

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the estimated cost, in 1992 prices, of detaining Judith Ward since 1974.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At 1992 prices, the average cost of detaining a female prisoner from November 1974 to May 1992 would be £424,000. Figures are not collected for particular individuals.

North Wales Police Force

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been *(a)* the total funding and *(b)* the established number of full-time officers of the North Wales police force in each of the past five years; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding to meet the public demands of this service.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Over the last five years expenditure and the police establishment of the North Wales police have been increased as follows:

Year	Expenditure £ million	Establishments
1987-88	32·96	1,316
1988-89	36·81	1,326
1989-90	41·1	1,330
1990-91	46·0	1,352
1991-92	[1]53·1	[2]1,352
1992-93	[3]—	1,369

[1] Estimated.
[2] No application made for establishment increase.
[3] Not available.

When considering applications for establishment increases, my right hon. and learned Friend takes account of a wide range of factors which influence demands on the police.

The Government are satisfied that the North Wales police authority is able to meet its obligations to provide an efficient police force.

Charitable Donations

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was donated to charity in Britain in 1979, 1981, 1986, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Jack: This information is not available centrally, but figures published by the Charities Aid Foundation show that the voluntary income of the top 200 charities in England and Wales for the years mentioned was:

	£ million
1979-80	293
1980-81	329
1985-86	721
1988-89	1,058
1989-90	1,184

Government support for the voluntary sector has increased regularly and is now around £2·4 billion per year, an increase in real terms of 114 per cent. over the period in question.

Prison Chaplains

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of the prison chaplaincy service in the last financial year for which figures are available; and how this was broken down by *(a)* chaplaincy salaries, *(b)* salaries of chaplaincy support staff, *(c)* chaplaincy budget, *(d)* expenses for visiting Christian chaplains and *(e)* expenses for visiting non-Christian ministers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The cost of the Prison Service chaplaincy in 1991-92 was £4·9 million. This can be broken down as follows:

	£
Salaries and related costs of all permanent staff	3,145,327
Fees and travelling for all visiting staff	1,191,603
Travelling expenses of volunteers	17,874
Other miscellaneous running costs	584,110
	4,938,914

There is no separate chaplaincy budget figure.

Prison Service Staff

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are employed in the Prison Service, broken down by *(a)* occupation and grade and *(b)* gender.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is as follows:

Grade	Male	Female	Total
Grade 2	1	—	1
Grade 3	4	3	7
Grade 4	1	—	1
Assistant Director	7	—	7
Grade 5	8	3	11
Governor 1	38	—	38
Grade 6	20	2	22
Governor 2	67	7	74
Grade 7	104	16	120
Catering Manager	3	—	3
Governor 3	93	10	103
Governor 4	274	25	299
Governor 5	316	46	362
Governor 5 (works)	62	—	62
Governor 5 (Catering)	10	—	10
Governor 5 (PE)	14	—	14
Governor 5 (Hospital)	17	—	17
Principal Officer	936	40	976
Principal Officer (works)	242	—	242
Principal Officer (Catering)	56	1	57
Principal Officer (PE)	83	2	85
Principal Officer (Hospital)	72	4	76
Principal Officer (Dog Handler)	2	—	2
Principal Officer (Instructor)	10	—	10
Senior Officer	2,219	100	2,319
SO (works)	245	1	246
SO (Catering)	92	3	95
SO (PE)	121	5	126
SO (Hospital)	186	3	189
SO (Dog Handler)	25	—	25
SO (Instructor)	36	—	36
Prison Officer	14,214	1,427	15,641
Prison Officer (works)	624	7	631
Prison Officer (Catering)	431	25	456
Prison Officer (PE)	366	20	386
Prison Officer (Hospital)	706	124	830
Prison Officer (Dog Handler)	390	4	394
Prison Officer (Instructor)	202	5	207
Temporary Officer	—	14	14
Senior Executive Officer	62	11	73
Higher Executive Officer (D)	—	1	1
Higher Executive Officer	186	117	303
Executive Officer	269	327	596
Administrative Officer	507	1,403	1,910
Administrative Assistant	165	538	703
Administrative Trainee	2	—	2
Principal Medical Officer	7	2	9
Senior Medical Officer	32	5	37
Medical Officer	83	6	89
P/T Medical Officer	99	6	105
Insp. Animals Sp. Insp.	1	—	1
Senior Professional and Technical Officer	109	1	110
Higher P & TO	123	2	125
P & TO	57	8	65
Senior Psychologist	16	25	41
Higher Psychologist	11	17	28
Psychologist	—	4	4
Psychological Assistant	16	20	36
Psychological Graduate Trainee	6	21	27
Chaplain General	1	—	1
Principal Roman Catholic Chaplain	1	—	1
Church of England Chaplain	92	2	94
P/T C of E Chaplain	111	16	127
Roman Catholic Chaplain	13	—	13
P/T Roman Catholic Chaplain	1	—	1
Principal Nursing Sister	—	5	5
Senior Nursing Sister	2	21	23
Nursing Sister	13	89	102
Nursing Officer	—	1	1
Senior Enrolled Nurse	5	25	30
Enrolled Nurse	5	55	60
Sister (Midwife)	—	2	2
Nurse (Occupational Health)	—	1	1
Nursing Auxiliary	1	9	10
Head Pharmacist	1	1	2
Principal Pharmacist	1	—	1
Senior Pharmacist	3	5	8
Pharmacist	1	—	1
Staff Principal Pharmacist	7	—	7

Grade	Male	Female	Total
Pharmacist Technician	2	11	13
Chief Physiolg Meas. Tech	1	—	1
Farms and Gardens Officer	4	—	4
Farm Manager	75	1	76
Higher Instructional Officer	28	1	29
Instructional Officer	902	132	1,034
Senior Personal Secretary	—	9	9
Personal Secretary	2	168	170
Typing Manager	—	13	13
Typist	—	416	416
Auxiliary Officer	1,070	256	1,326
Night Patrol	877	78	955
Telecom. Tech. Engineer	1	—	1
Higher Tcoms. Tech. Officer	1	—	1
Storeperson	410	16	426
Assistant Storeperson	121	11	132
Support Grades	21	184	205
Librarian	—	1	1
Tracer	—	1	1
Industrial Staff	2,488	227	2,715
Total	30,309	6,168	36,477

Border Controls (Republic of Ireland)

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the implications for the common travel area between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland of a decision by the latter to relax border controls along the lines advocated by the European Commission.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We attach considerable value to the common travel area arrangements, and a decision by the Government of the Irish Republic in the sense suggested in the hon. Member's question would inevitably have unwelcome implications. I do not, however, have any reasons to suppose that such a decision is likely in the absence of a general resolution of the frontiers question within the Community.

Mr. Adol Owen-Williams

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what occurred when Mr. Adol T. Owen-Williams junior recently arrived at Gatwick airport; what questions and comments were made to him by immigration officers; and what plans he has to investigate his statement that he was subject to offensive comments by immigration officers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Mr. Owen-Williams was refused entry because he failed to meet the criteria for admission as a visitor in the published immigration rules. He was asked a number of questions about his background, employment, financial status and future plans. His allegations about his treatment by immigration officers have been investigated and he will receive a full reply. The investigating officer is satisfied that no offensive comments were made to him by immigration officers.

Jersey Bailiff (Dismissal)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the reasons for the dismissal of Her Majesty's deputy bailiff in the island of Jersey.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As the Privy Councillor with special responsibility to the Crown for Jersey, and in consultation and agreement with the lieutenant governor and the bailiff, I advised the Queen that the deputy bailiff, Mr. V. A. Tomes, should be removed from office in the interests of the effective administration of justice in Jersey.

The principal function of the office of deputy bailiff is as a judge. Mr. Tomes has a history of extended delay in his delivery of judicial judgments, despite interventions by the Jersey authorities to assist him and despite undertakings given by him to the then Home Secretary in 1990.

In October 1991, my predecessor as Home Secretary decided that Mr. Tomes might continue in office subject to his meeting conditions imposed solely to ensure that his performance of his judicial duties should be to a satisfactory standard. Mr. Tomes accepted those conditions immediately, without reservation and in writing. He failed to meet them. He also declined the opportunity to resign which my predecessor then afforded him.

The history of failure to respond to warnings given, and to undertakings received, by previous Home Secretaries left me with no confidence that Mr. Tomes could properly be relied upon to discharge the vital requirement to deliver justice within reasonable time. Therefore, in fulfilment of my duty to uphold the Crown's ultimate responsibility for the good government of Jersey, I decided that I had no acceptable alternative to advising that he must leave office.

Personally I regret having to advise Her Majesty to take this sad but necessary step.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the last time a bailiff or deputy bailiff in the Channel Islands was dismissed on the initiative of United Kingdom Ministers.

Mr. Jack: There is no record of any such previous dismissal.

Death Penalty

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to review the use of the death penalty in those circumstances where it is still legally available as a sentence in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* None. A review of the law of treason remains on the agenda of the Law Commission, in the context of its work on the codification of the criminal law, but such a review has to take its place among the commission's other priorities.

Pornography

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that a Europe without frontiers will not extend to the importation into the United Kingdom of hard-core pornographic magazines and videos.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* We have no intention of relaxing controls on those who would seek to profit from the trade in pornography.

Prisoners (HIV)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is the policy of his Department to inform prison officers if an inmate in a prison in England and Wales is known to be HIV positive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The recommended practice is that such information obtained in a clinical context should be available only to staff with responsibility for the prisoner's health care unless the prisoner consents to wider disclosure in his own interests or, exceptionally, such disclosure is deemed necessary to prevent the spread of infection.

Bail Offenders

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to introduce legislation to give effect to the measures announced by his predecessor on 25 February to deal with offenders who commit an offence while on bail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I intend to support and encourage measures to reduce the incidence of offending on bail. By no means all the measures announced on 25 February require legislation; and work is already in hand on those measures not requiring legislation. Proposals for changes in the law will be introduced as soon as a suitable legislative opportunity occurs.

HEALTH

Health Boards

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many chairmen and how many non-executive directors, by authority in England, do not reside in the district in which the health authority or trust is situated.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally. Chairmen, members and directors are expected to live in or have close links with the authority or trust to which they are appointed.

Dentists

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what measures she is taking to provide national health service dental treatment for those patients of dentists who have stopped providing national health service treatment;

(2) if she will hold talks with the British Dental Association about the number of dentists who have stopped providing or intend to stop providing national health service treatment for their patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department is in frequent contact with the British Dental Association on a range of issues. There is no evidence of a widespread problem of dentists ceasing to provide NHS treatment. We recognise, however, that there are areas where some problems do exist. Family health services authorities are taking action to improve provision of dental care in their localities, and can make use of initiatives such as the location incentives scheme and employment of salaried dentists where a need exists. We are already discussing several possibilities with regional health authorities, family health services authorities and representatives of the profession on how to make further improvements.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the recommended maximum number of national health service dental patients registered with a dentist;

(2) what was the average number of national health service patients registered with each dentist contracted with family health services authorities and their predecessors in 1990-91.

Dr. Mawhinney: Before the introduction of the new dental contract in October 1990, patients did not register with dentists. At 31 December 1990 the average number of patients registered with general dental practitioners in England was 334. At 31 December 1991 the average number of patients registered was 1,605. We understand that the number of patients registering is still increasing. There is no recommended maximum number of registrations.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria are used by the Dental Practice Board when considering the removal of a dentist's name from the family health services authority list.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Dental Practice Board plays no part in the procedure for determining the removal of a dentist's name from a family health services authority list.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists have recorded no contact by way of estimate form in the last six-monthly period.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the six months period ending 30 April 1992, a total of 650 general dental practitioners contracted to family health services authorities in England —from a total of 14,978—had not submitted any dental payment claim to the Dental Practice Board.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists' names have been removed from the family health services authority list in each month in the last convenient six-monthly period.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not collected centrally. Between 30 September 1990 and 30 September 1991 there was a net decrease of 29 dentists practising in the general dental services in England.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists have no registration for continuing care and capitation payments at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: At 30 March 1992 a total of 482 dentists in England and Wales had no registrations for continuing care or capitation payments.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what impact she expects her Department's proposals on the future level of dentists' fees will have on the number of NHS dentists.

Dr. Mawhinney: The level of dentists' fees in 1992-93 is a matter for the dental rates study group, which will meet shortly.

Health Authority Funding, Stockport

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the change in formula for allocating funds to district health authorities, notified to Stockport in April.

Mr. Sackville: Regional health authorities are responsible for revenue allocations to health districts. It is

for them to use their judgment about the formula adjustments which best reflect local evidence about differences between their districts. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. R. B. Martin, chairman of North Western regional health authority.

Female Genital Mutilation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions since its implementation the Children Act 1989 has been used to prevent or act upon incidents of female genital mutilation.

Mr. Yeo: The Female Circumcision Act 1985 made female genital mutilation in this country explicitly illegal. Since the Act was implemented there has been no firm evidence of illegal mutilations carried out in this country.

Under the Children Act 1989 it would be possible for a local authority to apply to the court for a section 8 prohibited steps order which could be used to prevent female genital mutilation. Although data on the numbers of applications for these orders are collected, there is no central record as to the reasons why the applications are made.

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she has issued to councils regarding the administration and interpretation of the Children Act 1988; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The launch of the Children Act 1989 has been accompanied by an unprecedented exercise to disseminate detailed information on the Act to local authorities, courts, voluntary organisations and others involved in child care. A list of publications on the Children Act follows. These include nine volumes of regulations and guidance on the Children Act, produced by the Department, in conjunction with the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Home Office and the then Department of Education and Science. Publication of the various volumes of guidance took place between March 1991 and October 1991, with local authorities in England receiving a proportionate share of approximately 20,000 free copies of each volume. A revised edition of "Working Together on Inter-Agency Co-operation for the Protection of Children from Abuse" was produced which took account of the Children Act.

In addition to guidance to local authorities on the Children Act, the Department commissioned a number of training packs and copies were made available to local authorities. These are also included in the list of publications.

List of Publications on the Children Act aimed at local authorities

I Regulations and Guidance

Name of Publication	*Date of Issue/Launch*
Volume 1—Court Orders	6 March 1991
Volume 2—Family Support, Day Care and Educational Provision for Young Children	21 March 1991
Volume 3—Family Placements	15 April 1991
Volume 4—Residential Care	25 July 1991
Volume 5—Independent Schools	26 April 1991
Volume 6—Children with Disabilities	11 September 1991
Volume 7—Guardians Ad Litem and other Court Related Issues	7 October 1991
Volume 8—Private Fostering and Miscellaneous	15 October 1991
Volume 9—Adoption Issues	October 1991
Patterns and Outcomes in Child Placement	3 May 1991
Guidance for Local Authorities on Statistical Returns	May 1991
Working Together on Inter-Agency Co-operation for the Protection of Children from Abuse (New edition)	October 1991
The Welfare of Children in Boarding Schools Practice Guide	October 1991
Registration of Childminding and Day care: Using the Law to Improve Standards	October 1991
Practice Guide for GALROs	Not as yet issued
Guidance for GALRO Panel Managers	Not as yet issued
Timetabling of Care Proceedings before the implementation of the Children Act 1989	February 1992
The Care of Children—Principles and Practice in Regulations and Guidance	1989
Looking After Children—Assessing Outcomes in Child Care	December 1991

II Training Materials

Name of Publication	*Date of Launch/Issue*
National Children's Bureau	
Children and Group Day care, aimed principally at those responsible for registration and inspection in SSDs	16 May 1991 Launched by Minister of Health
National Children's Bureau	
Child Protection Training Project designed principally for local authority staff in relation to court orders obtainable for the protection of children	1 May 1991 Launched by Minister of Health
Family Rights Group	
Working in Partnership with Children and Families and Communities. It aims to give social workers and their managers a thorough knowledge of the inter-relationship of law and practice in relation to partnership and prevention	24 July 1991 Launched by P.S.S. Health

III Training Materials Centrally Commissioned

Name and Description of Pack and Preparing Body	*Date of Launch*
Open University	
"Putting it into Practice" Deals with the overall philosophy of the Children Act prepared jointly Department of Health with LCD principally for social workers, local authority lawyers and magistrates	23 January 1991 Launched by Minister of Health 29 January 1991 Launched by Lord Chancellor
Leicester University	
Children in Need and their Families: A New Approach. A guide to Part III of the Act for local authority Councillors	November 1990
Manual for Senior Managers of SSDs. Deals with the philosophy of the Act and major changes it brings about	3 May 1991
The Children Act—An Advisors Guide (video)	July 1991

IV Children Act Publicity—Leaflets etc

To date six booklets and a leaflet have been issued on the Children Act:

The Children Act and the Courts—A Guide for Parents
The Children Act and Local Authorities—A Guide for Parents
The Children Act and You—A Guide for Young People (leaflet)
The Children Act and the Courts—A Guide for Children and Young People
Getting Help from the Social Services—A Guide for Children and Young People

Living Away from Home Your Rights—A Guide for Children and Young People
Children Act and Day Care—A Guide to the Law

Diabetes

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are registered as diabetic within the parliamentary constituency of Barrow and Furness; and how many of those are under the age of 16 years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mrs. A. Graham, chairman of South Cumbria health authority.

Health Authority Funding

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consider the possibility of allowing virement between the cash-limited district health authority budget and the open-ended general medical services budget if there was local agreement.

Mr. Sackville: The cash limited health authority budget and the demand led general medical services budget are met from different votes. Transfer of provision between votes can only be effected by submitting a supplementary estimate.

Children's Teeth

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish in tabular form details of the average number of decayed, missing or filled permanent teeth in 12-year-old children in England based on the latest available information in each district health authority together with the comparable figures for 1982; and in which authorities the fluoride content of the water supply has been artificially increased.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave him on 14 June 1991, at columns *684-86* and the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 9 July 1991 at columns *335-36*.

The information requested for 1982 is not available.

Tinnitus

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will outline the research sponsored by her Department concerning tinnitus and include information on the number of people suffering from the condition.

Dr. Mawhinney: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research in the United Kingdom is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In 1991 the MRC spent £112,000 on research into tinnitus.

It is estimated that between 0·5 and 1 per cent. of the population are seriously affected by tinnitus.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a list of current and planned research studies into the possible causes of myalgic encephalomyelitis; indicating for each study, the start and completion dates, the commissioned body, the level of financial support and the nature of each study.

Dr. Mawhinney: Independently funded research is not notified to the Department of Health by any formal mechanism. As a result of attendance by officials at scientific meetings and visits to establishments where research is going on, we are aware of a wide range of research into possible causes of myalgic encephalomyelitis. This includes virological, endocrinological and neurotransmitter studies, studies of sleep disturbance and studies of immunological and muscle abnormalities.

The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council. The MRC is funding a study at the Institute of Psychiatry. The MRC and the Department are always willing to consider sympathetically soundly based researched proposals in competition with other applications. We are not at present funding studies which are specifically considering possible causes of ME.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is being done about myalgic encephalomyelitis and its epidemiology in order to establish a consensus of medical opinion regarding the treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis sufferers.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Medical Research Council is funding a study at the Institute of Psychiatry, associated with the Maudsley hospital, which is attempting to find ways to help sufferers from chronic fatigue syndrome—myalgic encephalomyelitis—attending GPs' surgeries to cope with their condition and regain their health. The results of that study, together with those of earlier epidemiological studies, will form a basis for deciding whether further epidemiological studies are required and the nature of those studies. At present, management of ME is on a case-by-case basis, depending on the symptoms.

Food Poisoning

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of cases notified to her from 1 January 1991 until 31 December 1991 in each health region for *(a)* food poisoning in general, *(b)* salmonella, *(c)* salmonella enteriditis, *(d)* salmonella enteriditis phase 4, *(e)* salmonella typhimurium, *(f)* campylobacter and *(g)* listeriosis.

Mr. Sackville: The detailed information requested has been placed in the Library.

The data show notification of food poisoning to the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys and laboratory reports of specific organisms to the Public Health Laboratory Service's communicable disease surveillance centre.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the total number of salmonella food poisoning cases, and the number of each of *(a)* typhimurium, *(b)* virchow, *(c)* total enteriditis and *(d)* PT4 in each year since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows totals of laboratory reports of all salmonellas and of selected salmonellas made to the Public Health Laboratory Service communicable disease surveillance centre.

Laboratory reports of salmonellas in faeces
England and Wales
1987 to 1991

Year	All[1]	Salmonella typhimurium	Salmonella virchow	Salmonella enteriditis Total	Salmonella enteriditis PT4 only
1987	17,551	6,400	1,281	5,784	3,670
1988	23,821	5,566	1,135	13,051	8,964
1989	24,649	6,080	1,507	13,013	9,652
1990	25,351	4,662	1,055	15,664	12,141
1991[2]	22,461	4,429	613	14,301	10,973

[1] All salmonellas excluding salmonella typhi, salmonella paratyphi.
[2] Provisional data.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Coal Privatisation

Mr. Riddick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether and when the Government will consult interested parties on the privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: The Government announced in the Queen's Speech their plans to introduce legislation to return British Coal to the private sector and are now in the process of considering the form and timing of coal privatisation. The Government have undertaken to consult on privatisation and I have today written to interested bodies seeking their views. I will of course welcome the views of any interested group or individual, by 22 June.

Lead Shot

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give tonnages of lead shot *(a)* made in and *(b)* imported into the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is not available.

GATT

Mr. Tyler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what the Government's current objectives are for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade negotiations.

Mr. Needham: The Government remain committed to an early and successful conclusion to the Uruguay round of negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. We are working with our European Community partners and other key participants to ensure that outstanding issues, particularly in the agriculture negotiations, are resolved as quickly as possible. A successful outcome will strengthen the multilateral trading system, boost world trade, and provide new opportunities for British exporters. It will also help to integrate developing countries and the countries of eastern Europe more closely into the international trading system.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has made at the most recent round of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade talks concerning the liberalisation of international trade for exporters from poorer countries.

Mr. Needham: In the negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the European Commission represents the European Community and the member states. The Government have made clear their commitment to a successful outcome to the Uruguay round negotiations. A Uruguay round agreement would bring considerable benefits to developing countries, providing greater opportunities for their exports and a more open and stable international framework for the domestic economic reforms which many of them are undertaking.

Greenhouse Emissions

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the full greenhouse gas emissions from different fuel cycles in the United Kingdom, including both the electricity generating technologies and the final fuel use technologies.

Mr. Eggar: Statistics on United Kingdom emissions of carbon dioxide and methane—the main "greenhouse gases"—are given annually in the Department of the Environment publication "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The figures for carbon dioxide are listed according to both emission sources and types of fuel. Further information on this subject can be found in the energy technology support unit report "The Impact of United Kingdom Electricity, Gas and Oil Use on Global Warming"—AEA Environment and Energy, 1991. I am arranging for a copy of this report to be placed in the Library.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any proposals for legislation under which accountancy firms acting as investigators for banks will not be able to act as receivers for companies placed by the banks into liquidation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no such plans.

Auditing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any plans to introduce legislation under which the bodies named as recognised supervisory bodies under part II of the Companies Act 1989 will be required *(a)* to admit members of the public to their council meetings and *(b)* to make their agenda papers public.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any plans to conduct a

competition investigation into the domination of the United Kingdom audit market by a limited number of firms.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Companies Acts Definitions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the provisions of the Companies Acts which relate to definitions of asset, liability and profit.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: There are no provisions in the Companies Acts which define an asset, liability or profit, although there are clarifications of the scope when the term "liabilities" is used and of realised profits. However, the statement of principles being developed by the Accounting Standards Board is expected to contain definitions of assets and liabilities and of gains and losses.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what evidence he has submitted to Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry into the collapse of BCCI.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department has co-operated fully with Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry.

Companies Act Investigations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will publish a summary of the findings of investigations carried out under section 447 of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The "Companies Annual Report" published annually provides information about company investigations under the Companies Act 1985. However, there is no statutory provision for reports of inquiries under section 447 to be published, and information obtained under section 447 may be disclosed only under the clearly defined circumstances set out in section 449 of the Companies Act 1985, as amended.

Public Limited Companies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any plans to propose legislation under which shareholders of all public limited companies will be required to choose from two firms nominated to the office of auditor.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Pension Schemes

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the provisions of the Companies Acts relating to the showing in company accounts of pension scheme surpluses.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: There are no specific provisions in the Companies Acts dealing with company pension scheme surpluses. However, the treatment of such surpluses is dealt with in the accounting standard dealing with accounting for pension costs—SSAP24.

Greenwich Generating Station

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received about the proposal by MetroPower to redevelop the Greenwich generating station; and if he will set up a public inquiry.

Mr. Eggar: More than 100 representations have been received by my Department. The London borough of Greenwich, the relevant planning authority, has objected to the application and the President is therefore statutorily obliged to call for a public inquiry to be held into MetroPower's application.

Arrangements for the public inquiry will be made when further information on aquaeous and atmospheric discharges from MetroPower, and the views of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the National Rivers Authority, have been received.

Internal Market Council

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Internal Market Council on 14 May.

Mr. Needham: I attended the Internal Market Council on 14 May.

Progress was made on a number of items which should benefit UK business. Political agreement, which meets all the main UK objectives, was reached on the third life insurance directive. This opens the way to completion of the single market for life insurance. There was also broad political agreement to an amendment to the second company law directive which limits the potential use as barriers to takeover of subsidiaries' shareholdings in parents.

There were two intellectual property items on the agenda. A Council resolution on increased protection for copyright and neighbouring rights, and in particular the importance of the Berne and Rome conventions, was agreed. Further work was commissioned on the proposed directive covering protection of rental and lending rights, with the objective of the Council reaching agreement in June. Separately, the UK emphasised the importance of trying to resolve technical issues relating to the proposed Community trademarks regulation.

A report on the procurement of services by utilities indicated that there should be no significant difficulties in reaching agreement at a future Council. There was a discussion about the possibility of harmonising hallmarking systems at Community level, something which most member states favour.

There was extensive discussion of the Commission communication on Article 8A of the treaty of Rome on the abolition of routine frontier controls between member states from 1 January 1993. The United Kingdom underlined the need to retain the possibility of selective controls on goods, and that practical solutions were needed to meet problems raised by changes in controls. We emphasised that the issue of frontier controls on people was a matter for the Foreign Affairs Council. Other member states expressed a range of views. But while some showed greater support for the Commission communication, many recognised that pragmatic solutions were needed to the practical issues raised. The Council conclusions agreed the priority of continuing work on border controls as part of the completion of the single market.

Other items on the Council agenda included progress reports by the Commission on work relating to customs agents, drug precursors, and export controls on dual-use goods. A common position was reached on the Community customs code which consolidates existing Community customs legislation.

Japanese Companies

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the number and location of employees of each of the Japanese-owned companies within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is not available in the form requested.

Assisted Area Boundaries

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will make it his policy to wait for the Department of Employment to review travel-to-work area boundaries before completing a review of assisted area boundaries.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. New travel-to-work areas will not be designated before 1994. The Government made it clear before the election that a review of the assisted areas map would be conducted early in this Parliament.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's estimate of the installed capacity of operational nuclear power stations in England and Wales in each year from 1994 to the year 2000.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* The principal operator of nuclear capacity in England and Wales is Nuclear Power plc. Decisions regarding nuclear capacity are mainly a commercial matter for the company. Nuclear Electric will operate its existing portfolio of nuclear stations as long as it is safe and economic to do so.

Rechar

Mr. Enright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how the interim capital cover arrangements for Rechar operational programmes are to be introduced.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* My Department expects to make an announcement shortly.

EDUCATION

Student Loans

14. **Mr. Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will bring forward proposals to increase student grants and to end the present system of student loans.

Mr. Forman: No.

Grant-maintained Schools

15. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many applications for grant-maintained status are currently being considered by his Department.

Mr. Forth: At 11 May, 43 applications for grant-maintained status were under consideration by the Department.

23. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the progress towards grant-maintained status for schools in Leicestershire.

Mr. Forth: There is one GM school in Leicestershire. I hope to see many others following the example of Long Field high school and joining the growing number of GM schools.

"'Allo 'Allo"

16. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he last watched an episode of "'Allo 'Allo" to assess its appropriateness for the national curriculum.

Mr. Forth: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have watched this programme. The question of its appropriateness does not arise; the national curriculum does not prescribe the study of this or any other television programme.

Funding, Greenwich

17. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the level of funding for education within the London borough of Greenwich in 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received a handful of letters about education funding in Greenwich. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has proposed a cap on the authority's budget which is, in his view, reasonable, appropriate and achievable in all the circumstances of the authority. It allows Greenwich a budget which is nearly 9 per cent. above its standard spending assessment for this year and 18 per cent. above last year's SSA.

Education Reforms

18. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on progress with the implementation of the Government's education reforms.

Mr. Forth: The Government are continuing to make rapid progress in implementing the important changes introduced in the Education Reform Act 1988 and in subsequent legislation. We have made steady progress in implementing the national curriculum; we have taken measures to ensure that schools admit pupils up to the limit of their capacity; we have introduced schemes of local management for schools and colleges; we have given schools the chance to opt out of local authority control; we have established city technology colleges; we have reformed further and higher education.

Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, further education and sixth-form colleges will be transferred from local authority control on 1 April 1993 to a new further education sector and will be funded direct by new national further education funding councils. The Act also established a single funding structure for higher education and enabled institutions other than present universities to award degrees and adopt university titles. In 1992 we took steps to ensure greater openness about the performance of individual schools and announced plans to give schools a bigger say in initial teacher training. Measures to support the growing number of grant-maintained schools will be introduced later this year.

Higher Education

19. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of young people are now entering higher education; and what was the figure 10 years ago.

Mr. Forman: The proportion of young people entering full-time higher education has increased from one in eight in 1979 to one in four currently.

Nursery Education

20. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what resources will be made available for nursery education provision in the year 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: The Government will announce their decision later this year on the total amount of resources, including the share for education, to be made available to local authorities in 1993-94. It will be for individual local authorities to decide how much to spend on the services for which they are responsible, and for authorities and schools to decide how to deploy the expenditure.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to encourage the creation of nursery places.

Mr. Forth: Over the years 1987 to 1991 the numbers of under-fives attending maintained schools in England increased by nearly 90,000, from 517,000 to 604,000. The local authority grant settlement for 1992-93 allows for an increase in education spending well in excess of inflation. The scale and form of services for under-fives is for local authorities to decide in the light of the settlement.

Music

21. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to protect and enhance the opportunity for young people to learn music and to develop choral and orchestral skills.

Mr. Forth: The final order for music in the national curriculum, which is now before the House, secures, for the first time, the place of practical music-making for all pupils aged between five and 14. It provides for children to learn to perform a wide range of music, both individually and in ensembles, and opportunity for them to develop both choral and orchestral skills.

The Department assists the implementation of the national curriculum through specific grant, and intends to continue its grant this year to Music for Youth, a national organisation which promotes practical music-making in schools.

Special Schools

22. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will make a statement about grant-maintained status for special schools.

Mr. Forth: Although the Government have considered whether to extend the option of grant-maintained status to special schools, we have no current plans to do so.

Local Management of Schools

24. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he has any changes to announce in his policy for the local management of schools.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no current plans for changes in his policy for local management of schools. As part of the promised three year review of LMS, he will be offering guidance to local education authorities on future developments later in the year.

Hornsey Centre for Children Learning

25. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether his Department has any plans to fund the Hornsey centre for children learning.

Mr. Forth: No.

Sixth-form Colleges

26. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what additional resources will be made available for small sixth-form colleges to help with administrative costs under the new regime.

Mr. Forman: The funds available to the new further education sector will take account of the costs to colleges of undertaking or buying in services currently provided for them by LEAs. The allocation of funds to colleges will be for the Further Education Funding Council.

Grammar Schools

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the contribution made to education by grammar schools.

Mr. Forth: Many grammar schools are centres of excellence and make a significant contribution to the education of our children. High educational standards are not, however, uniquely associated with any one particular type of school system and examination results vary widely between individual schools, whether selective or non-selective.

Educational Equality

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will meet teachers' representatives to discuss educational equality for pupils.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend will be visiting a number of schools and he looks forward to constructive exchanges with the teacher associations in due course.

Selection

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy on selection for secondary education at 11 plus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: We are in favour of a diversity of schools and of choice for parents. It is for local education authorities and the governors of voluntary and grant-maintained schools to establish the organisation of schools most appropriate for their area, in the light of local needs and the wishes of the community.

Where proposals are made to introduce selection in the admission arrangements of a school we will consider them carefully on their individual merits and in the light of the local community's views and needs.

Teacher Dismissals

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what current indications he has of the extent of dismissal of experienced teachers due to the shortage of funds for schools operating local management of schools.

Mr. Forth: The Department has seen no evidence that experienced teachers are facing dismissal because of local management of schools. LMS means that schools that attract and retain pupils receive more money and gives governing bodies the power to decide how best to spend that money for the benefit of pupils—including how many and which teachers to employ. Under LMS, the overall amount of money available for school education remains the responsibility of individual local education authorities.

Class Sizes (Primary Schools)

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has to reduce class sizes in primary schools.

Mr. Forth: The management of individual schools, including the number of pupils in particular classes, is a matter for governing bodies and LEAs to determine, in the light of local circumstances and priorities.

PRIME MINISTER

Plutonium Production Statistics

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister which Department of Her Majesty's Government will be responsible for the collection and annual publication of plutonium production figures from civil nuclear power stations following the abolition of the Department of Energy.

The Prime Minister: This information will now be provided by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Department of Energy

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the reallocation of resources committed to support programmes planned by the Department of Energy before it was abolished.

The Prime Minister: With the exception of work on energy efficiency, responsibility for the programmes of the former Department of Energy has been transferred to the Department of Trade and Industry. The provision for those programmes, as set out in the supply estimates for 1992-93 and approved in the Appropriation Act 1992, remains unchanged. Responsibility for energy efficiency has been transferred to the Department of the Environment.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Listed Buildings

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the relative responsibilities of the Department of the Environment and Department of National Heritage with respect to listed buildings.

The Prime Minister: Details were set out in news releases, issued by both Departments on 1 May, available in the Library of the House. Responsibility for the listing of historic buildings now rests with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage. Because of their close connection with planning controls, consents for works to listed buildings remain the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. There will be close consultation between the two departments, both on general policy and on particular issues. English Heritage will act as adviser to both Departments.

Learning Difficulties

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to required the Secretaries of State for Employment and for Health to issue a joint circular to training and enterprise councils and joint care planning committees on ways to enhance the prospects of training for people with learning difficulties.

The Prime Minister: The Department of Health will shortly be issuing guidance to local authorities on all services for adults with learning disabilities. This guidance will cover references to the need to plan day services in close co-operation with employment services and training and enterprise councils. The guidance is being prepared in collaboration with the Department of Employment and will be copied to TECs.

Security Commissioner (Report)

Mr. Hague: To ask the Prime Minister when the commissioner appointed under the Security Service Act 1989 will present his annual report for 1991; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A copy of Lord Justice Stuart-Smith's annual report for 1991 has been laid before the House today in accordance with section 4(6) of the Security Service Act 1989. The confidential appendix to the report has been excluded from that copy in accordance with section 4(7) of the 1989 Act. I am grateful to the commissioner for his work in reviewing the issue of warrants and in providing assistance to the tribunal as provided in the Act. I note that he is satisfied that the Secretaries of State have properly exercised their powers under the Act and that the arrangements in force for ensuring that the service discloses information only in accordance with the provisions of the 1989 Act are working satisfactorily.

Open Government

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals he has for greater openness in the machinery of central Government.

The Prime Minister: I have decided that, in the interests of greater openness about the machinery of government, it

would be appropriate to publish the memorandum of guidance circulated to Ministers as "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and the names and membership of the standing ministerial committees, sub-committees and working groups.

Accordingly, "Questions of Procedures for Ministers" has been placed in the Library of the House.

The names and membership of standing ministerial committees, sub-committees and working groups are as follows. In addition to the members, other Ministers are invited to attend meetings as and when the business requires.

The publication of this information goes a long way beyond anything published by previous Governments about central machinery.

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND DOMESTIC POLICY (EDP)

Composition

Prime Minister (chairman)
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Lord Privy Seal
Lord President of the Council
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Wales
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Secretary of State for Employment
Chief Secretary, Treasury

Other Ministers will be invited to attend for items in which they have a departmental interest.

Terms of Reference

"To consider strategic issues relating to the Government's economic and domestic policies"

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE AND OVERSEAS POLICY (OPD)

Composition

Prime Minister (chairman)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Chancellor of the Exchequer
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Defence
Attorney General

The Chief of Defence Staff will attend as required, as will the Chiefs of Staff when necessary.

Terms of Reference

"To keep under review the Government's Defence and Overseas policy."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON THE GULF (OPDG)

Composition

Prime Minister (chairman)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Secretary of State for defence
Attorney General

Terms of Reference

"To keep under review developments in the Gulf region and to co-ordinate any necessary action."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON NUCLEAR DEFENCE POLICY (OPDN)

Composition

Prime Minister (chairman)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for Defence

Terms of Reference

"To keep under review the Government's policy on nuclear defence."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN SECURITY (OPDSE)

Composition

Prime Minister (chairman)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for Defence

Terms of Reference

"To keep under review arrangements for defence and security in Europe."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON HONG KONG AND OTHER DEPENDENT TERRITORIES (OPDK)

Composition

Prime Minister (chairman)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Defence
Lord President of the Council
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Others, including the Attorney General, the Governor of Hong Kong, the British Ambassador in Peking, the Minister for Overseas Development, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the responsible Deputy Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, may be invited to attend as appropriate.

Terms of Reference

"To keep under review the implementation of the agreement with the Chinese on the future of Hong Kong and the implications of that agreement for the Government of Hong Kong and the wellbeing of its people; and to keep under review as necessary the Government's policy towards other Dependent Territories."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON NORTHERN IRELAND (NI)

Composition

Prime Minister (chairman)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Secretary of State for Defence
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Chief Secretary, Treasury
Attorney General

Other Ministers will be invited to attend as the nature of the business requires.

Terms of Reference

"To oversee the Government's policy on Northern Ireland issues and relations with the Republic of Ireland on these matters."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (EDS)

Composition

Prime Minister (chairman)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Secretary of State for Defence
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Secretary of State for the Environment
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Education
Secretary of State for Health
Chief Secretary, Treasury

The Chief Scientific Adviser is in attendance.

Terms of Reference

"To review science and technology policy."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES (IS)

Composition

Prime Minister (chairman)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Secretary of State for Defence
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

The Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Attorney General attend as appropriate.

Terms of Reference

"To keep under review policy on the security and intelligence services."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (EDI)

Composition

Lord Privy Seal (chairman)
Chancellor of the Exchequer
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Lord President of the Council
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Wales
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Secretary of State for Employment
Chief Secretary, Treasury

Terms of Reference

"To consider industrial, commercial, and consumer issues including questions of competition and deregulation."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT (EDE)

Composition

Lord Privy Seal (chairman)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Chancellor of the Exchequer
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Wales
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for National Heritage
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Chief Secretary, Treasury

Terms of reference

"To consider questions of environmental policy."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON HOME AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (EDH)

Composition

Lord Privy Seal (chairman)
Lord Chancellor
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Lord President of the Council
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Wales
Secretary of State for Social Security
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for National Heritage
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Secretary of State for Education
Secretary of State for Health
Secretary of State for Employment
Chief Secretary, Treasury
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Attorney General and the Lord Advocate also receive papers and are invited to attend as necessary.

Terms of Reference

"To consider home and social policy issues"

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT (EDL)

Composition

Lord Privy Seal (chairman)
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Secretary of State for Transport
Lord President of the Council
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Wales
Secretary of State for Social Security
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for National Heritage
Secretary of State for Education
Secretary of State for Health
Chief Secretary, Treasury
Minister of State, Department of the Environment (Minister for Local Government)

Terms of Reference

"To consider issues affecting local government, including the annual allocation of resources."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON THE QUEEN'S SPEECHES AND FUTURE LEGISLATION (FLG)

Composition

Lord President of the Council (chairman)
Lord Chancellor
Lord Privy Seal
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Attorney General
Lord Advocate
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury
Financial Secretary, Treasury
Captain of the Gentlemen-at-Arms

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs should be invited to attend or be represented for discussion of The Queen's speeches.

Terms of reference

"To prepare and submit to the Cabinet drafts of The Queen's Speeches to Parliament, and proposals for the Government's legislative programme for each Session of Parliament."

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATION (LG)

Composition

Lord President of the Council (chairman)
Lord Chancellor
Lord Privy Seal
Secretary of State for Wales
Secretary of State for Scotland
Attorney General
Lord Advocate
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Minister of State, Home Office
Financial Secretary, Treasury
Captain of the Gentleman-at-Arms

Terms of Reference

"To examine all draft Bills, to consider the Parliamentary handling of Government Bills, European Community documents and Private Members' business, and such other related matters as may be necessary; and to keep under review the Government's policy in relation to issues of Parliamentary procedures".

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE PAY (EDC)

Composition

Lord President of the Council (chairman)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Chancellor of the Exchequer

Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Secretary of State for Defence
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Social Security
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Secretary of State for Employment
Financial Secretary, Treasury

Terms of Reference

"To determine the basis of the annual negotiations and consider other matters concerning civil service pay."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON HEALTH STRATEGY (EDH(H))

Composition

Lord President of the Council (chairman)
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Wales
Secretary of State for Social Security
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Secretary of State for Health
Paymaster General
Minister of State, Department of Health (Minister for Health)
Minister of State, Department of Employment
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of National Heritage

The Secretaries of State for the Home Department, Transport and Education, and the President of the Board of Trade should receive papers and may be invited to attend as appropriate.

Terms of Reference

"To oversee the development, implementation and monitoring of the Government's health strategy, to co-ordinate the Government's policies on United Kingdom-wide issues affecting health, and report as necessary to the

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECTOR PAY (EDI(P))

Composition

Lord Privy Seal (chairman)
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Secretary of State for the Environment
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Education
Secretary of State for Health
Secretary of State for Employment
Chief Secretary, Treasury

Terms of reference

"To coordinate the handling of pay issues in the public sector, and report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Industrial, Commercial and Consumer Affairs."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN QUESTIONS (OPD(E))

Composition

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (chairman)
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for the Home Department
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Lord President of the Council
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Wales
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Secretary of State for Employment
Attorney General
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Other Ministers will be invited to attend as the nature of the business requires.

The United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the European Communities is also in attendance.

Terms of reference

"To consider questions relating to the United Kingdom's membership of the European Community and to report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Defence and Overseas Policy."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON EASTERN EUROPE (OPD(AE))

Composition

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (chairman)
Chancellor of the Exchequer
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Defence
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Secretary of State for the Environment
Secretary of State for Employment
Minister for Overseas Development
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Other Ministers may be invited to attend as the nature of the business requires.

Terms of Reference

"To consider questions relating to Britain's policy of assisting change in the former Soviet republics and other former Communist countries in Europe and report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Defence and Overseas Policy."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON TERRORISM (OPD(T))

Composition

Secretary of State for the Home Department (chairman)
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Secretary of State for Defence
President of the Board of Trade
Secretary of State for Transport
Secretary of State for Scotland
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Attorney General

Terms of Reference

"To keep under review the arrangements for countering terrorism and for dealing with terrorist incidents and their consequences and to report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Defence and Overseas Policy."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON LONDON (EDL(L))

Composition

Secretary of State for the Environment (chairman)
Minister of State, Home Office
Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Minister for Industry)
Minister of State, Department of the Environment (Minister for Housing and Planning)
Minister of State, Department of the Environment (Minister for Local Government)
Minister of State, Department of Social Security (Minister for Social Security and Disabled People)
Minister of State, Department of Education
Minister of State, Department of Health
Minister of State, Department of Employment
Economic Secretary, Treasury
Minister for Transport in London
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of National Heritage

Terms of Reference

"To co-ordinate the Government's policies on London."

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON DRUG MISUSE (EDH(D))

Composition

Lord President of the Council (chairman)
Solicitor General
Paymaster General
Minister of State, Home Office
Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence
Minister of State, Scottish Office
Minister of State, Department of Health (Minister for Health)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, Department for Education

Others, including the Minister for Overseas Development and Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State from the Departments of the Environment and Employment may be invited to attend as appropriate and should receive all papers.

Terms of Reference

"To coordinate the Government's national and international policies for tackling drugs misuse, and report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Home and Social Affairs"

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON CO-ORDINATION OF URBAN POLICY (EDH (U))

Composition

Secretary of State for the Environment (chairman)
Minister of State, Home Office
Minister of State, Department of the Environment (Minister for Local Government)
Economic Secretary, Treasury
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology, Department of Trade and Industry
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Transport
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Social Security
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of National Heritage
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for schools, Department for Education
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Employment

City Action Team (CAT) Ministers will be invited to attend for items in which they have an interest

Terms of Reference

"To monitor and coordinate Government action on inner cities, and report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Home and Social Affairs"

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOL MISUSE (EDH(A))

Composition

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (chairman)
Paymaster General
Minister of State, Scottish Office
Minister of State, Department of Health (Minister for Health)
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms, Department of Trade and Industry
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Transport
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, Department for Education
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Employment

Terms of Reference

"To review and develop the Government's strategy for combating the misuse of alcohol and to oversee its continuing implementation, and report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Home and Social Affairs"

MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES (EHD(W))

Composition

Secretary of State for Employment (chairman)
Paymaster General
Minister of State, Welsh Office
Minister of State, Department for Education
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms, Department of Trade and Industry
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Social Security
Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Minister for the Civil Service
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of Health
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Employment

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of the Environment will also receive papers and be invited to attend as necessary.

Terms of Reference

"To review and develop the Government's policy and strategy on issues of special concern to women: to oversee their implementation; and to report as necessary to the Ministerial Committee on Home and Social Affairs".

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Countryside Protection

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further measures he proposes to take to assist farmers to care for the countryside.

Mr. Curry: We propose to announce shortly final details of six new environmentally sensitive areas—ESAs—which will begin operating this year and to consult on plans for a further six areas to begin operating in 1993 as well as reviewing the five ESAs that were designated in 1988. We shall consider the scope for further measures in the context of reform of the common agriculture policy, including the proposed agri-environment programme, once the current negotiations reach a conclusion.

Veal Crate Rearing

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to the ban on veal crate rearing, what steps he will take to end the shipment of calves to Holland for the purpose of veal crate rearing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Legal advice is that a ban on the export of calves to Community countries would be illegal under the treaty of Rome. Our objective is for welfare rules to be introduced in the Community which reflect the high standards in the United Kingdom.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the number of calves shipped to the continent in 1991-92 for the purpose of veal crate rearing.

Mr. Soames: In the 12 months, April 1991 to March 1992, a total of 412,803 calves intended for further fattening were exported from Great Britain to the Continent. It is not possible to determine how many of these were for rearing in veal crates.

Tenancy Laws

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to reform agricultural tenancy laws.

Mr. Curry: Together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, we intend, subject to parliamentary time being available, to implement reforms which would encourage more letting of agricultural land by giving landlords and tenants greater freedom to agree their own arrangements in law.

Embryo Transplants (Cattle)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to protect the welfare of cattle used in embryo transplants.

Mr. Soames: Regulations for the collection and transfer of bovine embryos are being finalised by the Department. In preparing these regulations, full regard is being give to the welfare implications of the procedures of embryo collection and transfer. There will be a general requirement that all collections and transfers are carried out under the responsibility of a veterinary surgeon. In addition, two particular welfare provisions are envisaged:

—the use of epidural anaesthesia would be mandatory prior to any collection or transfer of embryos;

—the examination of recipient cows by a veterinary surgeon would be required prior to transfer taking place, to certify their suitability to carry the embryo intended for transfer.

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons has also proposed that, in conjunction with the British Veterinary Association, it will draw up a code of practice for bovine embryo transfer to complement the Regulations.

Quarantine

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current state of negotiations within the European Community over quarantine regulations.

Mr. Soames: Quarantine restrictions in relation to foot and mouth disease are being lifted within the Community in the light of the adoption of a non-vaccination policy in all member states. Although negotiations on quarantine for rabies susceptible species are continuing, this Government will not accept any solution which leaves the United Kingdom less well protected than under the existing rabies protection arrangements.

Less-favoured Areas

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further measures he proposes to take to promote opportunities for economically viable farming in less-favoured areas of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: Farmers in the less-favoured areas benefit from a wide range of support measures including hill livestock compensatory allowances—HLCAs—sheep and suckler cow premia, and capital grants which together are worth over £480 million annually. I have no plans to add to these measures. The sheep and suckler cow premia are currently subject to review in the context of CAP reform and HLCAs will be reviewed in the usual way in the autumn.

Fresh Meat Regulations

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes he proposes to institute in the system of fresh meat regulations to meet European requirements.

Mr. Soames: The Government's proposal for regulations implementing in Great Britain the requirements of the EC directive on fresh meat—91/497/EEC—were issued for public consultation on 23 April. The proposed regulations replace almost all the existing fresh meat hygiene regulations in Great Britain.

I also refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my right hon. Friend gave concerning the establishment of the national meat hygiene service on 13 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *124*.

Honey Bees

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what notification procedures are observed in his Department for the outbreak of Varroa Jacobsonni disease in honey bees.

Mr. Curry: The Bee Diseases Control Order 1982 requires that beekeepers should notify any incidence, or suspected incidence, of varroasis immediately to the responsible Agriculture Department for further investigation.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to ensure the continuing prohibition of the importation of honey bees to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: The Importation of Bees Order 1980 prohibits imports of honey bees except under licence from countries of high bee health status which are free from varroasis. Commission proposals currently under discussion in Brussels would replace these controls with trading rules which provide among other things for identification and protection of disease-free areas. We will be reviewing our import policy in the light of these rules, including the need to offer continued protection to those areas of the United Kingdom which remain free from varroasis.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken by his Department to prevent the spread of Varroa Jacobsonni internally within the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: We have declared an infected area which includes Cornwall, Devon, Avon, Somerset, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East and West Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Greater London, Oxfordshire and Surrey. Movement of bees and hive frames containing comb into or out of that area is

prohibited except under licence. Intensive testing to date has shown no evidence of the disease outside the infected area.

Rabies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recommendations have been made by the scientific and veterinary committee of the EC about measures to control rabies.

Mr. Gummer: The scientific veterinary committee's report has not yet been published. I understand that it is unlikely to recommend specific control measures, as it regards questions of enforcement as outside its remit.

Tobacco Growing

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *123*, if he will show the percentage of the common agricultural policy funding given to the subsidising of tobacco growing in the EC in 1991.

Mr. Curry: In 1991 the provisional cost of the tobacco regime as a percentage of the cost of the common agricultural policy was 3·85 per cent.

Trawls (Nephrops Fisheries)

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ban twin and multi-rig trawls in nephrop fisheries.

Mr. Curry: Yes. Following requests from and a consultation with the industry on additional measures to conserve nephrops stocks we propose to ban the use of twin-rig and multi-rig trawls by United Kingdom vessels in nephrops fisheries except in the Fladen ground from 1 January 1993.

DEFENCE

Dechmont Firing Range

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will give details of the number of incidents involving stray bullets which have occurred in each of the last 10 years at the Dechmont firing range, East Kilbride;

(2) if he will give details of any compensation paid to members of the public arising from incidents involving stray bullets at Dechmont firing range, East Kilbride, over the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Over the past 10 years, there has been one proven incident involving stray rounds from the Dechmont firing range. This was in October 1986. A board of inquiry found that the incident, involving two stray rounds, was caused by a soldier failing to follow the correct drills.

Compensation was paid to those who had property damaged as a result of the incident.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the gun clubs which are registered to use the Dechmont firing range at East Kilbride.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following non-MOD users are licensed to use the Territorial, Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve Association range at Dechmont:

Cartside Rifle Club
Avon Sporting Club
Balornock Rifle Club
West of Scotland Rifle and Pistol Club
Clyde Valley Pistol Club
Claymore Rifle and Pistol Gun Club
Martins Rifle and Pistol Club
Dechmont Air Gun Club
Strathclyde Police
British Deer Society

Firing Ranges

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the regulations which apply to registered gun clubs at MOD firing ranges.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Each civilian club which is licensed to use an MOD or Territorial Auxiliary Volunteer Reserve Association range has a range conducting officer who is responsible for ensuring full compliance with range standing orders.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if gun clubs registered to use MOD firing ranges are required to register individual weapons which will be used on the range.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. All weapons are registered with the local police under the provisions of the Firearms Acts and amendments thereto.

Khmer Nationals

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department is still providing any form of training for Khmer nationals in *(a)* Cambodia, *(b)* Thailand and *(c)* Malaysia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom military contribution to the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) includes a contingent providing mine clearance training for Cambodian nationals.

Lieutenant Commander Peter McDonnell

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what posting in the Royal Navy is currently held by Lieutenant Commander Peter McDonnell.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the current edition of the Navy list, a copy which is held in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date and at what place he expects the court martial of Lieutenant Commander Peter McDonnell to begin.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The court martial of Lieutenant Commander Peter McDonnell is to be held at HMS Drake, Devonport, commencing on 3 June 1992.

RAF Chivenor

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is his intention to implement the recommendation made in "Options for Change" to maintain RAF Chivenor as a leading training base.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

SCOTLAND

Overseas Voters

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many ballots were returned by overseas voters registered for each constituency in Scotland in the general election on 9 April.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally. Information about the total number of postal ballot papers returned for each constituency will be published in due course as a House of Commons Command Paper.

Gigha

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much land on the island of Gigha has been designated, as a percentage and in hectares, as a site of special scientific interest; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: No sites of special scientific interest have been notified on the island of Gigha.

Child Care, Fife

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline *(a)* the total cost of the inquiry into child care policy in Fife, and *(b)* the expected contribution to the costs to be made by Fife regional council.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the right hon. Member to the replies given to him by my hon. Friend the then Minister of State on 10 March 1992, at column *465*.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the inquiry into child care policy in Fife undertaken by Sheriff Kearney has been completed.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The chairman of the inquiry has been asked to let my right hon. Friend have his completed report by the end of May.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland is he will make a statement about the inquiry into child care policy in Fife.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend will consider the question of a statement once he has received and studied the completed report of the inquiry.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the report from the inquiry into child care policy in Fife is to be published.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As soon as my right hon. Friend has received and considered the report of the inquiry, he will make a decision about publication.

New Town Corporations

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the actual capital receipts for each of the Scottish new town development corporations for each of the last five years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The actual capital receipts for 1991-92 are not yet available. The figures for the previous five years are as follows:

£ million

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Cumbernauld					
Housing	5·338	7·257	8·587	5·500	10·557
OES[1]	1·915	4·070	7·806	10·636	8·129
East Kilbride					
Housing	8·445	13·169	10·933	18·742	15·313
OES[1]	4·470	4·212	4·932	12·692	9·340
Glenrothes					
Housing	5·140	4·857	4·226	7·314	10·134
OES[1]	1·206	3·694	5·832	4·695	8·564
Irvine					
Housing	2·755	2·229	3·419	4·811	3·506
OES[1]	1·012	1·927	5·707	2·483	2·619
Livingston					
Housing	3·327	4·400	6·750	10·316	7·142
OES[1]	3·501	3·100	1·663	5·525	14·400

[1]Other Environmental Services covers receipts from industrial, commercial and land sales.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the current value of the *(a)* commercial, *(b)* industrial and *(c)* housing assets of each of the Scottish new town development corporations.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information for commercial and industrial assets is as follows. The valuations are at 31 March 1992.

	Commercial property £ million	*Industrial property £ million*
Cumbernauld	2·18	44·75
East Kilbride	23·92	47·83
Glenrothes	11·60	25·16
Irvine	8·23	24·44
Livingston	3·56	53·63

The housing stock is not valued annually. Individual houses are valued as necessary.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the amounts paid in corporation tax by each of the Scottish new town development corporations in each of the last five years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: East Kilbride was the only new town in Scotland to incur corporation tax liability in the last five years. Audited figures are not yet available for 1991-92 but in the previous five years the tax paid was:

	£ million
1986-87	2·551
1987-88	1·794
1988-89	1·727
1989-90	4·240
1990-91	2·893

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the capital allocations for each of the five Scottish new town development corporations for each of the last five years at current prices.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is set out in the table.

£ million

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Cumbernauld					
Housing	8·474	8·994	11·385	6·504	6·874
OES[1]	13·801	16·033	14·485	11·485	8·806
Infrastructure[2]	—	—	—	3·605	2·800
East Kilbride					
Housing	17·963	22·335	18·107	9·657	9·155
OES[1]	20·485	16·048	15·377	16·164	9·930
Infrastructure[2]	—	—	—	2·038	3·300
Glenrothes					
Housing	7·519	6·975	7·439	6·068	7·080
OES[1]	7·152	11·670	17·497	9·101	4·174
Infrastructure[2]	—	—	—	2·090	2·400
Irvine					
Housing	6·438	5·704	6·836	5·227	5·700
OES[1]	11·803	10·237	8·473	4·778	3·281
Infrastructure[2]	—	—	—	1·448	1·000
Livingston					
Housing	9·614	12·326	15·725	6·104	7·117
OES[1]	18·755	28·052	25·013	16·802	9·970
Infrastructure[2]	—	—	—	4·650	3·700

[1] Other Environmental Services covers industrial and commercial investment.
[2] Prior to 1991-92 investment in infrastructure was funded from the capital allocations for housing and other environmental services.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the revenue allocations for each of the five Scottish new town development corporations for each of the last five years at current prices.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Revenue expenditure of the Scottish new town development corporations is supported by housing deficit grant and general revenue grant. The housing deficit grant meets the deficit incurred on building and modernisation of housing including management and maintenance after taking account of rental income. General revenue grant meets the costs of management and maintenance of community facilities and general administrative expenses. General revenue grant was introduced from the 1991-92 financial year. Prior to that part of the revenue expenditure was included in new towns' borrowing consent totals and not separately identified. A grant was also provided to meet interest charges on accumulated deficits on non-housing activities.

Details at current prices of the housing deficit and general revenue grant are shown in the tables.

Housing Revenue Deficit Grant

£ million

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Cumbernauld	5·313	5·700	5·197	4·112	3·768
East Kilbride	1·286	1·112	0·889	0·521	0·028
Glenrothes	5·459	5·585	4·453	3·598	3·019
Irvine	8·944	8·109	6·889	6·112	5·566
Livingston	15·789	13·564	13·890	12·200	9·916

General Revenue Grant

£ million

	1991-92	1992-93
Cumbernauld	1·800	2·050
East Kilbride	4·465	2·720
Glenrothes	4·885	4·513
Irvine	2·990	2·435
Livingston	5·860	4·684

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the level of capital receipts assumed for each of the five Scottish new town development corporations for the current financial year.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

£ million

	Housing	OES[1]
Cumbernauld	6·574	11·806
East Kilbride	7·055	15·930
Glenrothes	5·180	8·174
Irvine	4·000	2·281
Livingston	5·617	12·970

[1] Other Environmental Services covers receipts from industrial, commercial and land sales.

Renewable Energy

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the Government's target of 1,000 MW of renewable energy projects he estimates is to come from Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Targets for the exploitation of renewable energy are under consideration as part of the current review of the Government's renewable energy programmes.

Nephrops Fisheries

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if a weekend ban on fishing for nephrops will be introduced on the West Coast of Scotland following the consultation exercise on nephrops conservation.

Sir Hector Monro: While the catching side of the fishing industry is generally in favour of a weekend ban, a number of concerns have been expressed by processors over the implications for their activities. We have therefore decided that the matter should be considered in some more detail and I have today written to Lord MacKay, chairman of the Sea Fish Industry Authority, inviting him to convene a second nephrops forum where the views of all parties can be considered in detail and possible ways forward explored.

Water

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the increase in cost of provision of water in each water authority in Scotland shown as a percentage of the cost of provision last year.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* The estimated expenditure on water supply to be met from charges in each authority has changed as shown:

Change in cost of water provision in 1992-93 as percentage of cost in 1991-92

Authority	*Percentage*
Borders	+ 23
Central	+ 2
Dumfries and Galloway	+ 9
Fife	+ 9
Grampian	+ 4
Highland	+ 5
Lothian	+ 9
Strathclyde	+ 7
Tayside	+ 4
Orkney	+ 13
Shetland	− 6
Western Isles	+ 11

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to provide additional resources to local water authorities in Scotland to meet the resource implications of the EC drinking water directive.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* Water supply comes within the water and sewerage programme, capital expenditure provision for which has risen substantially from £142 million in 1990-91 to £221 million in 1992-93, an increase of more than 50 per cent. It is set to rise further to £244 million by 1994-95. The EC drinking water directive was a factor taken into account in determining the increased resources.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to provide extra resources to help meet deficits experienced by water authorities as a result of diminished sales.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* Deficits arising from shortfalls in income due to diminished sales of water are a matter for authorities to take into account when setting charges in succeeding years, in accordance with statutory provisions. Government assistance would not be appropriate.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates he has made of the additional capital and current costs of providing water that will require to be borne by local water authorities in Scotland as a result of the additional requirements of the EC drinking water directive.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* The requirements of the EC drinking water directive are incorporated in the Water Supply (Water Quality) (Scotland) Regulations 1990. Capital expenditure for undertakings to the Secretary of State for improvement works to meet the regulations totals £1·6 billion for works up to 2000 and beyond. Corresponding current cost implications are not separately identifiable.

Disabled People (Housing)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by district council, the number of applications made for adaptations to the homes of disabled people in each of the last five years; how many adaptations were carried out in each year; and what was the average length of time to complete adaptations from the request for an adaptation to be made to its conclusion.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* The information in respect of district councils is not held centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Regional council social work departments may also help disabled people with adaptations to their homes. Information on the number of applications made through social work departments and the length of time to complete adaptations to the homes of disabled people is not held centrally.

The number of adaptations carried out by social work departments in each of the last five years, where available, is as follows:

Adaptations to property provided by Scottish Social Work Departments
Number of cases, year ending 31 March

Region	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Borders	581	521	489	766	766
Central	832	800	825	n.a.	1,559
Dumfries/Galloway	815	637	1,067	1,134	1,147
Fife	1,300	2,259	2,313	3,208	2,403
Grampian	2,152	1,855	2,087	2,653	3,382

Region	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Highland	554	555	596	373	502
Lothian	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Strathclyde	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Tayside	2,852	4,496	3,211	3,149	2,374
Orkney	35	59	63	63	82
Shetland	112	147	128	132	157
Western Isles	44	38	98	108	33

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the amount of money spent by each local authority in Scotland in the last three years on home improvement grants.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* The available information on improvement grants paid by local authorities for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 is set out in the table.

Improvement grants paid by local authorities, year ended 31 December

£000

District	Year 1989 Grants paid	1990 Grants paid	1991 Grants paid
Scotland	56,804	55,547	65,951
Borders			
Berwickshire[1]	345	385	388
Ettrick and Lauderdale	554	710	789
Roxburgh	473	547	511
Tweeddale	156	50	328
Central			
Clackmannan	92	167	107
Falkirk	314	447	471
Stirling	460	337	535
Dumfries and Galloway			
Annandale and Eskdale	208	363	216
Nithsdale	557	515	652
Stewartry	65	190	141
Wigtown	210	201	388
Fife			
Dunfermline	596	5,637	673
Kirkcaldy	856	970	913
North East Fife	1,173	1,324	1,408
Grampian			
Aberdeen	2,926	3,308	4,013
Banff and Buchan	615	518	449
Gordon	423	478	465
Kincardine and Deeside	597	909	722
Moray	777	542	732
Highland			
Badenoch and Strathspey	72	88	89
Caithness	320	332	341
Inverness	554	913	601
Lochaber	459	268	440
Nairn	146	100	143
Ross and Cromarty	2.101	1,457	1,721
Skye and Lochalsh	763	669	910
Sutherland	363	464	482
Lothian			
East Lothian	2,142	1,272	960
Edinburgh	7,512	5,900	9,152
Midlothian	359	380	400
West Lothian[4]	783	719	795
Strathclyde			
Argyll and Bute	3,784	2,253	2,421
Bearsden and Milngavie	71	70	16
Clydebank	34	58	26
Clydesdale	718	794	459
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth[2]	38	68	70
Cumnock and Doon Valley	166	241	168
Cunninghame	613	1,002	4,261
Dumbarton[3 4]	228	75	16
East Kilbride	94	148	199
Eastwood	37	43	28
Glasgow	11,622	12,184	13,730
Hamilton	69	458	366
Inverclyde[1]	1,821	2,707	2,886
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	169	318	131
Kyle and Carrick	486	248	452
Monklands	84	228	245
Motherwell	324	270	496
Renfrew	1,497	1,761	1,829
Strathkelvin	200	196	227
Tayside			
Angus	538	543	485
Dundee	1,336	2,026	1,949
Perth and Kinross	1,388	579	403
Islands Councils			
Orkney Islands[1]	991	838	755
Shetland Islands[2]	76	100	88
Western Isles	3,448	3,254	4,309

Returns outstanding:
[1]Quarter 2 1989.
[2]Quarter 3 1989.
[3]Quarter 3 1990.
[4]Quarter 4 1990.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now consider increasing the funds available to local housing authorities to enable them to offer more grants for home improvement schemes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* The gross final non-housing revenue account capital allocations for local authority expenditure in support of private sector housing in 1992-93 total £121·016 million. This represents a substantial increase of 8·9 per cent. over the corresponding allocations for 1991-92. It is for local authorities themselves to decide how best to deploy these resources to meet local housing needs, including the need for home improvement grants.

Pre-school Funding

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total allocation of central Government funding to pre-school development groups in *(a)* speech therapy and *(b)* physiotherapy in each regional health board area for each financial year since 1987 and the projected expenditure in such spheres in each financial year from 1992 to 1995.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* No specific allocation of resources are made to health boards for speech therapy or physiotherapy. Allocations of resources for the purchase of services to meet the health care needs of their resident population are made to health boards each year and it is for them to determine their priorities and how the money will be spent.

EMPLOYMENT

Restart

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many restart interviewees fell within the guarantee group and how many fell within the aim group, for the latest available period for Great Britain and for each region; how many of each of those groups were submitted or placed in *(a)* employment training, *(b)* enterprise allowance scheme, *(c)* job club, *(d)* job interview guarantee or *(e)* employment action; and how many such claimants were not made an offer of help, showing whether it was because (i) they were already on or about to start on a scheme, (ii) they were about to leave the unemployment register, (iii) an offer could not be made because there was no appropriate scheme place available or (iv) an offer could not be made due to the claimants' attitude or behaviour or severity of their problem.

Mr. McLoughlin: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if non-employed employment training trainees who receive part-time earnings, who were solely in receipt of unemployment benefit before receiving their training allowance, are subject to the earnings rules for unemployment benefit; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

"Actively Seeking Work" Test

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claimants in each quarter since March 1991 for each region and for Great Britain as a whole have *(a)* been issued with warning letters for not actively seeking work, *(b)* had their claim referred to an adjudication officer for not actively seeking work, *(c)* had their claims allowed or disallowed for not actively seeking work, *(d)* had their claim referred to an adjudication officer for refusing suitable employment and *(e)* how many of those in *(d)* have had their benefit disqualified or not disqualified.

Mr. McLoughlin: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Bridging Allowances (Young People)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list by region and for Great Britain as a whole, shown separately for males and females how many 16 and 17-year-olds were in receipt of extended child benefit, how many were in receipt of bridging allowance for each month since September 1991 and how many young people in each region and in Great Britain exhausted their entitlement to youth training bridging allowance; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Disability Benefits

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if claimants who are receiving disability benefits, or a disability premium with their income support, are eligible to take up a place on the enterprise allowance scheme; what disability benefits they can retain while they are on the allowance and trying to start a small business; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Claimants who are receiving disability benefits or a disability premium with their income support are eligible to take up a place on EAS, provided they meet the local entry criteria. People receiving an enterprise allowance are entitled to the full range of in-work disability benefits in the same way as anybody else who is employed or self-employed.

TEC and LEC Statistics

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise council and local enterprise company chief executives are in post; how many are male or female or from an ethnic minority background; how many have resigned since their TEC or LEC became operational; what information she has on the employment backgrounds of the chief executives, including the numbers who have retained their civil service status; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Of the 82 training and enterprise councils in England and Wales, 81 have a chief executive or acting chief executive in post. One is in the process of being filled. Of these, 69 are men and 12 are women. Information on the ethnic origin of TEC chief executives is not available. Since individual TECs became operational, seven of them have had a change in chief executive. Information on the employment background of chief executives is not held centrally, but 45 are civil servants.

Information about LECs in Scotland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Options Careers Fair

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether her Department will be represented at the options careers fair to be held at the national exhibition centre in Birmingham in October.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department has been informed that "Options 92 Career Planning" has been cancelled.

Employment Service

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress the Employment Service made in meeting the targets outlined in the 1991-92 agency agreement; and if she will show for the latest possible date the *(a)* total unemployed job placings and variance from target, *(b)* long-term unemployed job placings and variance from target, *(c)* people with disabilities job

placings and variance from target, *(d)* inner-city job placings and variance from target, *(e)* number of claims not pursued following initial contact and variance from profiled annual reference level, *(f)* number of claimants moved from unemployment benefit to another benefit and variance from annual reference level and *(g)* number of people who withdrew their claim to benefit after contact with fraud investigators and variance from annual reference level.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am informed by the chief executive of the Employment Service that in the period April to December 1991, the Employment Service placed a total of 1,020,100 unemployed people into jobs, within 1 per cent. of the profiled target. A total of 17·8 per cent. of these placings were long-term claimants, 2·4 per cent. were people with disabilities and 34 per cent. were unemployed people in inner cities against annual targets of 16 per cent., 2·4 per cent. and 34 per cent. respectively. Over the same period, 416,950 claims were not pursued following initial contact, 18 per cent. above the profiled reference level. The number of people who withdrew their claim to benefit after contact with fraud investigators was on target at 35,950. The number of claimants helped to move from unemployment benefits to a more appropriate benefit is not a reference level under the annual performance agreement for 1991-92.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the numbers of male and female directors of training and enterprise councils; how many are from ethnic minority backgrounds; how many directors are from the private sector; from which industrial sectors they come; and of non-private sector directors, how many are from *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* local education authorities, *(c)* other educational organisations, *(d)* trade unions, *(e)* voluntary organisations, *(f)* ethnic minority organisations, *(g)* employers' associations and *(h)* others.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information available is shown in the table. Information on the industrial sector background of directors from the private sector is not held centrally.

Category	*Number of directors*
(i) Men	1,018
(ii) Women	122
(iii) Ethnic minority background[1]	40
(iv) Private sector	799
(v) Non-private directors	341
of which	
(a) Local authorities	98
(b) Local education authorities (not included in (a))	51
(c) Other educational organsiations	28
(d) Trade unions	61
(e) Voluntary organisations	43
(f) Ethnic minority organisations	4
(g) Employers Associations	10
(h) Others	46

[1] Based on information collected in June/July 1991: 12 Directors preferred not to state their ethnic origin.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what responsibilities training and enterprise councils have for training people with learning difficulties; and what steps she is taking to ensure they fully meet these responsibilities.

Mr. McLoughlin: TECs are obliged through their contracts with the Department to ensure that suitable high quality training is available for all trainees with special training needs. This includes people with learning disabilities. TEC's performance against their plans is regularly monitored by officials.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish the budget agreed with each training and enterprise council in England and Wales for 1992-93, broken down into the five major expenditure blocks; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The budget allocations for training and enterprise councils in England and Wales for 1992-93 are still subject to negotiation in some of the Department's training, enterprise and education directorate regions and therefore not yet available.

Employment Programmes

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many and what proportion of employment training leavers for each region and for Great Britain as a whole *(a)* had been entered for a vocational qualification, *(b)* had obtained a vocational qualification, *(c)* had failed to obtain a vocational qualification and *(d)* were awaiting their results; and how many of the enterprise training leavers in the relevant period had completed the training agreed in their initial action plan;

(2) if she will publish tables showing the latest available results from the employment training leavers' survey for each training and enterprise council area in England and Wales and each local enterprise company area in Scotland broken down to show the number and proportion of employment training leavers who had *(a)* been entered for a vocational qualification, *(b)* obtained a vocational qualification, *(c)* had failed to obtain a vocational qualification and *(d)* were awaiting their results; and how many of the employment training leavers in the relevant period had completed the training agreed in their initial action plan;

(3) how many people were participating in (i) employment training, (ii) the enterprise allowance scheme and (iii) youth training in each month since November 1991; and if she will make a statement;

(4) for each region, and for Great Britain as a whole, whether she will give the latest results of the youth training scheme—youth training leavers survey, to show for male and female trainees and for each separate ethnic group and for those with a disability *(a)* those in full-time work with the same employer, *(b)* those in full-time work with a different employer, *(c)* those in part-time work, *(d)* those on a full-time course at a college-training centre, *(e)* those on another youth training scheme, *(f)* those doing something else, *(g)* those who were unemployed, *(h)* those who had obtained a vocational qualification, *(i)* the number of questionnaires issued, *(j)* the usable percentage response rate and *(k)* the percentage of respondents who were early leavers;

(5) if she will publish tables showing the latest available results from the employment training leavers' survey for each TEC area in England and Wales and each LEC area in Scotland broken down to show the number and

proportion of employment training leavers who were *(a)* in a full-time job with their work experience employer, *(b)* in a full-time job with another employer, *(c)* employed in their own business, *(d)* in a part-time job, *(e)* in voluntary work, *(f)* on another Government training programme, *(g)* on a full-time education or training course, *(h)* unemployed and claiming benefit, *(i)* unemployed and not claiming benefit, *(j)* in a job club and *(k)* doing something else;

(6) if she will state for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, separately for males and females, how many people have entered employment action and how many were participating in employment action in each month since January 1992;

(7) how many and what proportion of employment training trainees for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, for the latest available period, were, three months after leaving *(a)* in a full-time job with their work experience employer, *(b)* in a full-time job with another employer, *(c)* employed in their own business, *(d)* in a part-time job, *(e)* in voluntary work, *(f)* on another government training programme, *(g)* on a full time education or training course, *(h)* unemployed and claiming benefit, *(i)* unemployed and not claiming benefit, *(j)* in a job club and *(k)* doing something else;

(8) if she will state for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, separately for males and females what percentage of persons aged *(a)* 16 years and *(b)* 17 years have been on youth training schemes in each year since YTS-YT started.

Mr. McLoughlin: As the information requested is contained in a number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give for each region and for Great Britain as a whole for 1991-92 *(a)* the number of people who were receiving payments under the enterprise allowance scheme and *(b)* the amount of expenditure on enterprise allowance schemes; what information she has on the survival of those businesses; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information, by region and for Great Britain as a whole, on the numbers of people receiving the enterprise allowance at the end of the 1991-92 financial year is shown in the table. The table also shows EAS expenditure on allowances.

There is no information available on the survival of those businesses starting during the 1991-92 financial year.

Number of People Receiving Enterprise Allowance: 1991-92

Region	*Participants*	*Payments £000's*
South East	3,269	11,391
London	4,611	12,697
South West	3,991	9,623
West Midlands	4,173	9,904
East Midlands	4,281	10,576
Yorks and Humberside	4,085	11,154
North West	6,805	16,430
Northern	2,258	6,048
Wales	2,756	7,136
England and Wales Total	36,229	94,959
Scotland	4,000	—

Notes:
1. Participant totals as at the end of the financial year.
2. A separate payments figure for Scotland is not available.

Travel-to-work Areas

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will outline the timetable for reviewing travel-to-work area boundaries.

Mr. McLoughlin: New travel-to-work area boundaries will be calculated from the commuting patterns contained in the 1991 census of population special workplace statistics. These statistics are expected to become available in the second half of 1993 and revised travel-to-work areas should follow six to nine months later.

Markham Main Colliery

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the likely increase in unemployment in the Doncaster north constituency should the proposed closure of the Markham Main colliery go ahead.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is not possible to estimate the increase in unemployment in any particular area if and when Markham Main colliery is closed. A number of organisations including British Coal Enterprise, and this Department through the Employment Service and training and enterprise councils, offer a wide range of help with job finding and retraining to unemployed mine workers.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 20 May 1992

PRIME MINISTER

Science and Technology

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what support Her Majesty's Government (1) are giving through the EC to an international science and technology centre to be sited in Russia;

(2) when he received a copy of the Royal Society report on the state of science in the former Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I received the Royal Society report on 17 January. It is a very valuable analysis of the problems facing scientists in the former Soviet Union. After careful study of the report's recommendations the Government are making a sum of £670,000 available for increased bilateral assistance; £350,000 will come from existing programmes in the current year and the remainder will be charged to the reserve. The entire sum is within the planning total of public expenditure.

The European Community is contributing some £14 million, of which the United Kingdom's share is approximately 18 per cent., to the creation of an international science and technology centre. The centre will fund research projects for scientists in the former Soviet Union who have hitherto been working on weapons programmes.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what basic scientific equipment is being provided to the former Soviet republics.

The Prime Minister: None is provided directly. However the United Kingdom institutions participating with former Soviet Union counterparts in joint projects supported by the Royal Society may apply to the society for up to £500 to purchase basic equipment for their partner.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the recent visit by the chief scientific adviser, Professor William Stewart, to the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister: The chief scientific adviser visited Russia on 15 and 16 March, in order to discuss the difficulties faced by scientists in the former Soviet Union and how the United Kingdom might help. During his visit he called on the Ministries of Atomic Energy and Science, Technology and Higher Education, and on the Russian Academy of Sciences, as well as meeting other senior members of the Russian science community.

LORD CHANCELLOR

Repossession Orders

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what were the number of repossession orders granted by the county courts in Wales during the years, 1979, 1987 and 1991.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The 1979 figures are not available. The table shows the total number of mortgage possession actions entered and orders made in Welsh county courts during 1987 and 1991. The figures do not indicate how many houses have been repossessed through the courts as not all of the orders made will have resulted in the issue and execution of warrants of possession. At this stage the 1991 figures are provisional and therefore liable to revision in the future.

Mortgage possession actions in Welsh county courts during 1987 and 1991

	Actions entered	*Orders made*
1987	4,959	2,857
1991	10,235	7,428

TRANSPORT

Central Rhine Commission

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decisions have been reached on future United Kingdom participation in the Central Rhine Commission.

Mr. Norris: After having consulted interested representatives of the shipping industry, I have decided that the benefits of continued United Kingdom membership of the Central Rhine Commission are no longer sufficient to justify our annual expenditure on this organisation. We will therefore be giving the Central Rhine Commission formal notice of our intention to withdraw from 31 December 1993.

Train Doors (Safety)

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Health and Safety Executive has completed its investigation into the pattern of falls from passenger trains with slam doors.

Mr. MacGregor: The Health and Safety Executive has today made public the conclusions of its investigation into falls from slam-door trains. I have arranged for copies of the summary report to be placed in the Library.

The full report of the investigation will be submitted to me by the Health and Safety Commission and published by HSE later in the summer.

Cycle Helmets

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive a report from the Transport Research Laboratory following its evaluation of the effectiveness of current pedal cycle helmets in reducing head injuries.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The work being done by the Transport Research Laboratory, formerly the Transport and Road Research Laboratory, on current pedal cycle helmets is expected to be completed by March 1994.

M3

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to invite tenders for further work on the M3 Bar End-Compton.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* Tender documents are being prepared with a view to starting the main works for the final section of the M3 between Bar End and Compton later in the year.

A1, Gateshead

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consideration he has given to providing a new road to relieve congestion on the A1 through Gateshead;

(2) what proposals he has to widen the A1 through Gateshead;

(3) what alternatives he has considered to the provision of a new road and the widening of the existing road to relieve congestion on the A1 through Gateshead.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 19 May 1992]:* The A1 Gateshead western bypass improvement scheme was included in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" published in 1989. The consultants appointed by the Department to determine practical and viable options for consideration have not yet completed their work.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in England and Wales that each Home Office Minister has visited since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Complete records do not go back as far as 1979. To assemble them would involve disproportionate cost. The information in the table about prisons, young offender institutions and other establishments in England and Wales visited by Ministers in the Home Department since my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) became Home Secretary in 1990 is complete.

Prisons in England and Wales visited by the Secretary of State and Ministers for the Home Department since 23 November 1990

Ministerial visits	*Date*
Right hon. Mr. Kenneth Baker	
Gloucester	30 November 1990
Wandsworth	5 December 1990
Glen Parva	14 December 1990
East Sutton Park	20 December 1990
Send	11 January 1991
Wormwood Scrubs	31 January 1991
Bedford	1 February 1991
Onley	13 February 1991
Newbold Revel	13 February 1991
Pentonville	21 February 1991
Reading	27 February 1991
Winchester	6 March 1991
Coldingley	15 March 1991
Bullingdon	22 March 1991
Blundeston	9 April 1991
Oxford	17 May 1991
Shepton Mallet	5 July 1991
Belmarsh	18 July 1991
Durham	15 August 1991
Frankland	15 August 1991
Grendon	21 August 1991
Channings Wood	24 September 1991
Wayland	22 November 1991
Blantyre House	10 January 1992
Whitemoor	22 January 1992
Feltham	4 February 1992
Wolds	23 February 1992
Right hon. Mr. Kenneth Clarke	
Wormwood Scrubs	29 April 1992
Right hon. the Earl Ferrers	
Northallerton	21 October 1991
Right hon. Angela Rumbold	
Pentonville	12 December 1990
Feltham	8 January 1991
Guys Marsh	21 January 1991
Latchmere House	28 January 1991
Gloucester	18 February 1991
Bullwood Hall	28 February 1991
Grendon	4 March 1991
Downview	6 March 1991
East Sutton Park	18 March 1991
Leeds	10 April 1991
Liverpool	22 April 1991
Manchester	21 May 1991
Durham	4 June 1991
Wandsworth	18 June 1991
Leyhill	26 June 1991
Ford	29 June 1991
Wormwood Scrubs	1 July 1991
Portland	15 July 1991
Askham Grange	31 July 1991
Blantyre House	10 September 1991
Aylesbury	7 October 1991
Reading	7 October 1991
New Hall	17 October 1991
Wakefield	17 October 1991
Finnamore Wood	24 October 1991
Wolds	6 November 1991
The Mount	2 December 1991
Cookham Wood	16 December 1991
Brixton	8 January 1992
Moorland	9 January 1992
Belmarsh	20 January 1992
Canterbury	12 February 1992
Lincoln	14 February 1992
Mr. Peter Lloyd	
Pentonville	29 April 1992
Drake Hall	8 May 1992

Footpaths

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what figures he has for the number of prosecutions in each year since 1987, for cycling on footpaths *(a)* for England and *(b)* for Somerset.

Mr. Jack: The information is given in the table.

Number of defendants prosecuted for the offence of cycling on footpaths by area 1987-1990

Year	England and Wales	England	[1] Somerset
1987	541	527	21
1988	585	577	128
1989	453	427	27
1990	483	454	20

[1] Total of prosecutions heard at the Petty sessional divisions within the administrative county of Somerset.

Adol Owen-Williams

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what basis Adol Owen-Williams was refused entry to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on the treatment Mr. Owen-Williams received from immigration officers.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate the treatment of Mr. Adol Owen-Williams of Germantown, Maryland, by the immigration services at Gatwick airport in April.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 19 May, at column *93*.

Police

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are taken to monitor the levels of absence through sickness and injury in police forces.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In December last year the Home Office issued guidance to chief officers of police in England and Wales about the collection of data on sickness absence and assaults. Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary has also issued guidance and is paying particular attention to data collection and other aspects of sickness absence management. All police forces in England and Wales should now be monitoring sickness absence in a consistent way.

Grendon Prison

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are awaiting entry into Grendon prison; what plans are being made to open a second similar type of prison; and what plans are being made to open a similar prison for women.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of 247 prisoners were on the waiting list for transfer to Grendon prison on 18 May 1992. The question of a second psychiatric prison is being considered in a review of services to meet the needs of mentally abnormal offenders, including women. The review is being carried out jointly by the Home Office and Department of Health. The report is expected to be received in September 1992.

Wild Goats (Shooting)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce regulations to prohibit the shooting of wild goats, other than in extreme and specified circumstances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have no plans to do so.

Football

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what definitive guidance he gives to local authorities and police authorities arising from the recommendations of the Taylor report.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Hitherto, guidance has been given by means of Home Office circulars and, in the case of sports ground safety, in the Home Office guide to safety at sports grounds known as the green guide, the latest version of which was published in November 1990 to take account of the Taylor recommendations.

With matters concerning safety at sports grounds presently being transferred to the Department of National Heritage, responsibility for providing future guidance will also pass to that Department.

Fire Safety

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to implement the fire safety requirements of European Council Directives 89/391/EEC and 89/654/EEC relating to the health and safety of workers at work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend intends to implement these requirements by making regulations under section 12 of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 and has today embarked on a public consultation exercise which will end on 18 July 1992. Copies of the consultative document have been placed in the Library of both Houses.

The regulations will apply to most places of work with one or more employees. In this way the regulations will fulfil the Home Secretary's responsibility to ensure, by legislative means, that people at work, are as safe as possible from the risk of fire.

The onus for ensuring that workplaces have adequate standards of fire safety is placed firmly on the employer or the occupier of the premises. From 1 January 1993, he or she will have to make an assessment of the risk of fire to persons in the workplace and prepare an emergency plan. The plan will include details of the means of fighting fire on the premises, the action to be taken by the employees in case of fire, the evacuation procedure to be followed and the arrangements for calling the fire brigade.

There will be a staged application of some of the regulations in accordance with the workplace directive—89/654/EEC. The regulations concerned relate to the requirements to provide adequate means of escape in case of fire and fire detection and alarm systems. They will apply:

(a) to premises used for the first time as a place of work after 31 December 1992, from 1 January 1993;

(b) to places of work existing on 31 December 1992, by 1 January 1996; and

(c) to those parts of such premises at *(b)* which are modified, extended or converted by works which are commenced after 31 December 1992, from the date on which the works are completed.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Official Report

Mr. Spearing: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will state the last date to which the bound sessional index volume of the *Official Report* refers; when he expects further publication of bound index volumes relating to the last Parliament to be published; and what plans he has for reducing the interval between the end of a parliamentary Session and publication of the relevant bound index.

Mr. Beith: The last Session for which there is a bound sessional index volume for the *Official Report* is 1988-89. Work is taking place on the index for Session 1989-90 which it is hoped will be published in the first half of 1993. The index for Session 1990-91 is expected to be published a few months later. I understand that the Librarian is reviewing the production of the three published indexes to the *Official Report* with a view to speeding up publication of the sessional index.

Palace of Westminster (Cleaning)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will make a statement on the progress of the cleaning of the external faces of the interior walls of the Palace of Westminster; and if he will take steps to ensure this work is completed in the current Parliament.

Mr. Beith: The current stage of the programme of external stone cleaning and restoration at the Palace of Westminster, which covers the south elevation and the Victoria Tower is on programme for completion in 1994. Before that, a programme will be agreed for the next stages covering the internal courtyards so that this work can continue.

Newspapers

Mr. Allen: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission if he will seek for arrangements to be made for Members to be able to purchase daily newspapers from a location within the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Beith: In the first instance it would be for the Administration Committee to recommend, if it established that there was sufficient interest from Members, whether such a service should be provided.

Select Committees

Mr. Allen: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission how many staff are currently employed in the Clerk's Department on duties principally related to departmental Select Committees.

Mr. Beith: Sixty-six.

General Store

Mr. Allen: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what plans there are for establishing a general store within the Palace of Westminster where hon. Members could buy household items, and miscellaneous stationery.

Mr. Beith: A shop selling a limited range of items has already been established in 1 Parliament Street. The Accommodation and Works Committee in its first report, Session 1991-92 HC 269–I approved plans for a "necessities" shop in the phase 2 building and undertook to give

"further consideration at a future date to the range and type of retail units needed to serve Parliament and the public".

The use of other accommodation would need the approval of the relevant Committee.

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness Centres

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what homeless centres are at present being funded by the Government in the Tooting constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Since 11 December 1991, my Department has been funding English Churches housing group to provide up to 40 bedspaces at Rame House, in Church lane, Tooting Bec. Rame House was opened as part of the Department's programme of emergency accommodation for people sleeping rough last winter. The shelter is to close on 31 May; and I understand that English Churches hopes by then to have found accommodation for most of the residents.

Rural Economy

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to promote employment diversification in the rural economy.

Mr. Maclean: The Government will continue to work through agencies such as the Rural Development Commission to promote enterprise and economic diversity in a lively and prosperous countryside. For example, we announced as part of our "Action for the Countryside" package that the commission would soon be launching a new initiative, the countryside employment programme. The pilot scheme, which was launched today, will aim to diversify the economy and improve job prospects in those rural areas which are most vulnerable to changes in agriculture.

Local Government Review

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the guidelines to the Local Government Commission regarding the review of local government will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: We will give the Local Government Commission guidance on policy and procedures once it has been set up. We intend to issue revised policy guidance and procedure guidance in draft to the local authority associations before giving it to the commission.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is still the intention of Her Majesty's

Government to require the Local Government Commission to conduct an early review into the future of the county of Humberside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: We intend to ask the Local Government Commission to give special priority to reviewing local government structure in Humberside and Lincolnshire where the Local Government Boundary Commission found a strong case for change.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons energy efficiency was not included in the press announcement regarding the allocation of ministerial responsibilities; and if there is a Minister responsible for energy efficiency in his Department.

Mr. Howard: Energy efficiency is an important new responsibility of my Department. My noble Friend Lord Strathclyde will have primary responsibility for energy efficiency, reporting, where necessary, to my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, and to myself.

Property Services Agency International

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the privatisation of the Property Services Agency International.

Mr. Robin Squire: In July 1991, my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for the Environment announced the timetable for privatisation of PSA Services. The announcement stated that PSA International, which is largely concerned with defence maintenance overseas, was not saleable as a separate organisation and would be closed by the end of 1993. PSA Projects International, the overseas arm of PSA Projects, will, however, be offered for sale with that business.

Homelessness

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons are or were registered as homeless in *(a)* London and *(b)* in the London borough of Brent (i) now and (ii) in 1979.

Mr. Baldry: The available information is on the numbers of households for whom local authorities accepted responsibility for securing permanent accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and the Housing Act 1985. Estimates of the number of persons in these households is not available centrally.

The available information is as follows:

Homeless households accepted for permanent rehousing[1]

Year	Greater London	Brent
1979	15,054	1,074
1991	39,590	1,384

[1]A new reporting system was introduced for London authorities from the third quarter of 1982, and the definition of acceptances was altered from the second quarter of 1991, to exclude "intentionally" homeless. Earlier Greater London figures have been adjusted to the new basis, but the adjustment cannot be applied to individual local authorities. The acceptances figures for 1979, especially that for Brent, are therefore not strictly comparable with those for later years.

Note: Includes households awaiting the outcome of enquiries who may not be accepted as homeless.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any radioactive waste is imported into the United Kingdom as a constituent part of spent irradiated nuclear fuel.

Mr. Maclean: Nuclear material is classified as waste only if no further use is foreseen for it. Spent nuclear fuel imported for reprocessing does not meet this criterion. Constituents of such spent fuel only become waste when they are separated in the reprocessing plant from the potentially valuable uranium and plutonium.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the members of the Local Government Commission and the address of the commission's headquarters.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Commission has not yet been set up. Sir John Banham has agreed to become its chairman. Other members will be announced shortly. The location of the commission has not yet been decided.

Radioactive Tritium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provisions are in place at civil nuclear facilities to protect against the dispersal of radioactive tritium from sites.

Mr. Maclean: Civil nuclear sites are subject to strict regulation by both the nuclear installations inspectorate —NII—and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution— HMIP—jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—MAFF.

The storage of nuclear matter including radioactive waste containing tritium is licensed by the NII under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965. Disposal of radioactive waste is authorised jointly by HMIP and MAFF by means of strict limits and conditions imposed in certificates issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. The regulating authorities inspect nuclear sites regularly to ensure that the terms of the site licence and authorisation are being met.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those nations which must agree to limit their carbon dioxide emissions before Her Majesty's Government will agree to a mandatory deadline of the year 2000 for stabilising carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Ainger) on 13 May, *Official Report*, column *138*.

Wetlands

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to designate wetland sites in the Solent and adjoining waters under the Ramsar convention.

Mr. Maclean: Preparation of a case for designation of Southampton Water and the Solent as a Ramsar site and special protection area is part of the work programme agreed between English Nature, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Department of Environment. However, English Nature is unlikely to be in a position to make a formal recommendation before 1993-94.

Battery Industry

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the changes that it is proposed to introduce for integrated pollution control in relation to components for the battery industry.

Mr. Maclean: A number of processes involving the production of components for the battery industry will require authorisation under the integrated pollution control system by 1996, in accordance with the timetable set out in the Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1991, SI. 1991/472. Before applications are made to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution for authorisation, the chief inspector will issue guidance covering each process which will set out the standards which will be applied. Industry will be fully consulted during the preparation of this guidance.

Repossessions

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's current estimate of the number of homes that may be repossessed by banks and building societies in 1992.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), on 15 May, *Official Report*, column *238*.

City Challenge

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what levels of expenditure will be allocated for city challenge in the financial year 1994-95, expressed both as a net figure and as a proportion of total inner city expenditure; and how many local authorities will be selected as winners.

Mr. Redwood: City challenge expenditure on the 11 pacemakers and the 20 round 2 winners will be £82·5 million and £150 million per annum respectively for five years. No decisions on future rounds of city challenge have yet been taken.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what process of evaluation of the city challenge bid for 1992 is taking place; what consultation will take place with the communities concerned; and when he expects to announce the winners.

Mr. Robin Squire: City challenge bids are being assessed against the criteria set out in the bidding guidance issued in February. Official level meetings are currently being held with each of the urban programme authorities which submitted a bid. The purpose of these meetings is to allow the local authority and their partners, including representatives of local communities, to clarify their proposals. I and my colleagues will make the final assessment before announcing the winners by the end of July.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he will be announcing the winners of city challenge.

Mr. Redwood: The winners of the second round of city challenge will be announced by the end of July 1992.

Urban Programme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of urban programme funding for each year since 1979, expressed both in net figures, current prices and as a proportion of the total urban programme allocation, has been allocated to individual projects designed to promote positive action in relation to *(a)* ethnic minorities and *(b)* disabled people.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested on projects relating to ethnic minorities is as follows:

	Ethnic expenditure		
	£000 (cash)	*£000 1991-92 prices*[1]	*As percentage of urban programme*
1980-81	6,500	12,771	4
1981-82	7,500	13,439	4
1982-83	15,000	25,090	7
1983-84	27,000	43,162	12
1984-85	31,000	47,195	14
1985-86	37,000	53,384	17
1986-87	35,500	49,589	16
1987-88	31,500	41,732	13
1988-89	29,500	36,464	12
1989-90	30,500	35,404	13
1990-91	27,000	28,890	11
1991-92	28,627	28,627	11

[1] 1991-92 prices adjusted by GDP deflator.
Note: Information on projects for disabled people is not available.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his latest estimates for allocations from his Department for the urban programme, expressed both as net expenditure at current prices and as a percentage of total urban block expenditure for the next five years, beginning 1992-93.

Mr. Redwood: The planned allocations for the urban programme for 1992-93 and 1993-94, expressed as net expenditure at 1992-93 prices and as a percentage of total urban block expenditure are given in the table. No decisions on allocations for subsequent years have yet been taken.

Year	*Urban programme provision £ million*	*Percentage of urban block provision*
1992-93	245	30
1993-94	232	29

Defective Housing

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the estimated number, location by local authority area and by building type of privately owned homes known to be defective and outside the scope of the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Mr. Baldry: That information is not available in the form requested. When the housing defects legislation was

passed, it was estimated that there were some 3,000 privately developed dwellings of designated types, whose owners would therefore not be eligible for assistance, in addition to those owners who bought ex-public sector stock in knowledge of the defects.

Planning Regulations

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to exercise his powers to make regulations under sections 106A and 106B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Sections 106A and 106B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 were inserted into that Act by section 12(1) of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991. These provisions, which are not yet fully in force, enable my right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to make various regulations governing applications to a local planning authority to modify or discharge a planning obligation and appeals to my right hon. Friends when such applications are refused or not determined. Such appeals may be determined by a planning inspector if my right hon. Friends so determine.

The Government's proposals for these regulations are set out in a public consultation paper, which has been issued today to local authority associations and other representative bodies for their comments. The main proposals are that a person or persons bound by a planning obligation will be able to agree with the responsible local planning authority to modify or vary it; someone who is bound by a planning obligation will be able to apply to the local planning authority for it to be modified or discharged once five years have elapsed since it was entered into; the applicant will be required to serve notice on others with an interest in the land concerned or who are tenants of it, and the local planning authority will be required to publicise the application; the authority will not be able to determine the application until a set period for representations has elapsed; when the authority determines an application it will have to send a notice to the applicant. If the application is refused, the notice will state clearly and precisely the authority's reasons and set out the applicant's right of appeal; an applicant will have six months from the date of the notice of refusal to lodge an appeal; a form will be prescribed for appellants to use which will set out the rights of either party to a public local inquiry if they wish; appeal decisions will be given in writing and with reasons; a planning inspector will be able to determine all classes of appeal under section 106B, although my right hon. Friends may recover individual cases for their own determination.

My right hon. Friends intend to make regulations this autumn to bring these proposals into effect.

Integrated Pollution Control

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the process applications for integrated pollution control authorisations which have applied for commercial confidentiality, analysed by process categories and sub categories as specified in the Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1991; how many of these Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has declined to accept and how many have gone to appeal to the Secretary of State; and what was the result of these appeals.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* The information is as follows:

Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1991

Applicant	*Section reference*
National Power, Skelton	1.3(a)
National Power, Willington	1.3(a)
National Power, Drax	1.3(a)
National Power, Eggborough	1.3(a)
National Power, Agecroft	1.3(a)
National Power, Blyth	1.3(a)
National Power, Thorpe	1.3(a)
National Power, Padiham	1.3(a)
National Power, Ironbridge	1.3(a)
National Power, Rugeley	1.3(a)
National Power, Uskmouth	1.3(a)
National Power, Pembroke	1.3(a)
National Power, Littlebrook	1.3(a)
National Power, West Thurrock	1.3(a)
National Power, West Burton	1.3(a)
National Power, Didcot	1.3(a)
National Power, Staythorpe	1.3(a)
National Power, Fawley	1.3(a)
National Power, Tilbury	1.3(a)
National Power, Aberthaw	1.3(a), 1.3(b)
PowerGen, Ferrybridge	1.3(a)
PowerGen, Drakelow	1.3(a)
PowerGen, Fiddlers Ferry	1.3(a)
PowerGen, Ince	1.3(a)
PowerGen, Hams Hall	1.3(a)
PowerGen, Castle Donnington	1.3(a)
PowerGen, High Marnham	1.3(a)
PowerGen, Cottam	1.3(a)
PowerGen, Isle of Grain	1.3(a)
PowerGen, Richborough	1.3(a)
PowerGen, Ratcliffe	1.3(a)
PowerGen, Kingsnorth	1.3(a)
ICI, Wilton	1.3(a)
British Salt	1.3(a)
Cabot Carbon Ltd.	1.3(a)
Lindsey Oil	1.3(a)
Esso	1.3(a)
Fibrogen	1.3(c)
Vert	3.5
Synthetic Chemicals Ltd.	4.1(c)
Hickson & Welch Ltd.	4.2(a)
Robinson Brothers Ltd.	4.2(c)
N. R. Grace Ltd.	4.2(c)
Fine Organics	4.2(c)
Great Lakes	4.2(d)
NIPA	4.2(d)
BP Chemicals Ltd.	4.2(d)
Bio-synthetics	4.2(d)
Nexton Chemicals	4.2(j)
ICI Fine Chemicals	4.4(c)
Peboc Ltd.	4.4(e)
Rhône-Poulenc	4.7(ii)

A total of 39 applications for confidentiality have been rejected in total or in part: and 30 of these are currently the subject of appeals to the Secretary of State. None of the appeals has yet been determined, but decisions will be made as soon as possible.

Chair of State

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the Chair of State.

Mr. Key: I have been asked to reply.

The Chair of State remains on display at the Victoria and Albert museum. I understand that the National Heritage Memorial Fund is still hopeful that the chair will be returned to the Palace of Westminster, but that this is dependent on a charitable trust being set up to which ownership of the chair can be transferred.

WALES

Rented Housing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the level of capital investment in housing for rent by both local authorities and housing associations in 1979, 1987 and 1991 in Wales;

(2) what was the level of capital investment in housing for rent by both local authorities and housing associations in 1979, 1987 and 1991 in Blaenau Gwent.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Outturn information is as follows:

	Wales £ million		*Blaenau Gwent £ million*	
	HA	*LA*	*HA*	*LA*
1979-80	30·7	81·8	[1]n/a	6·0
1987-88	64·5	135·7	[1]n/a	6·9
1990-91	116·0	125·6	8·1	4·0

[1] Prior to 1988-89 the Housing Corporation did not report expenditure by Local Authority.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the average fair rents of housing association-owned housing in Wales in *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* currently; and what are the current assured tenancy rents by housing associations in Wales;

(2) what the average fair rent of housing association-owned property in Blaenau Gwent was in 1987; and what are the average fair rents and average assured rents of housing association-owned property currently in Blaenau Gwent.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many homes were available for rent by local authorities and housing associations in Blaenau Gwent in 1979, 1987 and at the most recent available date;

(2) what are the number of homes available for rent by local authorities and housing associations in Wales in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1987 and *(c)* currently.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information, excluding dwellings awaiting sale or demolition, is as follows:

Local authority dwellings available for rent at 1 April

	1987	*1991*
Blaenau Gwent	10,871	9,777
Wales	253,028	222,290

Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

A total of 27,928 housing association dwellings were available for rent at 31 March 1991. Figures on housing association dwellings awaiting sale or demolition are not held separately for Wales prior to 1989, or by district.

Source: Housing for Wales.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the number of homes for rent built by local authorities in Wales in 1979, 1987 and currently.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is given in the table:

Local Authority Completions

	Number
1979	3,010
1987	810
1991	421

Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

Housing associations are now the main providers of social housing in Wales. Housing for Wales provided more than 3,500 new homes last year, 1991-92, and expects to complete around 4,000 in the current year.

Council Tenants

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many council tenants in Wales were in receipt of housing benefit and what percentage this was of the total number of council tenants in 1987; and what are the equivalent current figures.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested for 1990-91, the latest available year, is given in the following table. The numbers are provisional estimates based on information at the end of February 1991. Equivalent figures are unavailable for 1987 as there was an element of double counting prior to 1988.

Local authority tenants receiving rent rebate, 1990-91

	Estimated number of recipients	*Percentage of total number of tenants (at 1 April 1991)*
Aberconwy	1,783	71
Alyn and Deeside	2,944	61
Arfon	3,277	69
Blaenau Gwent	6,821	70
Brecknock[1]	1,820	69
Cardiff	14,343	77
Carmarthen	1,961	59
Ceredigion	1,722	55
Colwyn	1,841	76
Cynon Valley	3,684	77
Delyn	3,437	77
Dinefwr	1,544	65
Dwyfor	881	64
Glyndwr	1,700	61
Islwyn	3,861	68
Llanelli	4,705	73
Lliw Valley	3,378	70
Meirionnydd	1,187	61
Merthyr Tydfil	4,920	77
Monmouth	2,728	59
Montgomeryshire[2]	1,994	48
Neath	3,796	74
Newport	8,902	70
Ogwr	6,753	75
Port Talbot	3,671	69
Preseli Pembrokeshire	3,340	63
Radnorshire	523	47
Rhondda	3,900	82
Rhuddlan	1,732	67
Rhymney Valley	7,694	82
South Pembrokeshire	1,816	68
Swansea	11,785	73
Taff-Ely	4,836	73
Torfaen	7,928	62
Vale of Glamorgan	3,865	67

	Estimated number of recipients	Percentage of total number of tenants (at 1 April 1991)
Wrexham Maelor	8,144	55
Ynys Mon	3,784	73
Wales	153,000	69

Source: Department of Social Security, Welsh Office local authority returns.

[1] Data not available, estimated value given.

[2] Includes 474 recipients from Newtown which is designated as a new town.

Disabled Facilities Grant

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when his Department plans to announce the outcome of the recent review of the disabled facilities grant system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The findings of the review of the house renovation grant system, including disabled facilities grants, are under consideration. We hope to make an announcement shortly.

Young Unemployed

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policy initiatives he intends to take to reduce the number of young people without jobs.

Mr. David Hunt: The Careers Service and the Employment Service already offer a wide range of services aimed at helping young people find suitable employment. The Government are firmly committed to quality training for young people and all 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in full-time education or employment are entitled to a youth training place. By 1996 all 16 and 17-year-olds in this category will be entitled to a training credit which will increase their ability to obtain jobs with training to approved standards and to achieve recognised qualifications.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish drop-in centres to assist young people out of work.

Mr. David Hunt: The Careers Service and the Employment Service already offer a wide range of readily accessible services to young people aimed at providing advice, guidance and information on suitable training and employment opportunities.

Vandalism

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what studies he has made of vandalism in Wales; and what policies he has to lessen vandalism in town centres and housing estates.

Mr. David Hunt: Vandalism is an aspect of crime which is being tackled along with others in Wales by the police, local authorities, the probation service and voluntary bodies working together. The reduction of vandalism in town centres and on housing estates is one of the elements of the strategies being pursued.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Tobacco

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether the submission by the Health Education Authority on the review of tobacco sponsored sport on BBC television is in accordance with the policy of Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Government's policy is that sport should be allowed to benefit from tobacco sponsorship providing it is subject to the proper control. That control is provided by the voluntary agreement which exists between the Government and the tobacco industry. The Health Education Authority report "Tobacco and the BBC" makes recommendations about the BBC's present sports coverage. The content of its programmes is a matter for the BBC. I understand that the BBC's producers' guideliness draw attention to the voluntary agreement. The Government believe that the agreement is working well.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inspectors' Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will publish a list showing the DTI inspectors' reports relating to post-1979 investigations carried out under the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The table lists all inspections under sections 432 and 442 of the Companies Act 1985, or their predecessor sections, where inspectors were appointed after January 1980 and have submitted a report.

Date of appointment	Company name	Date of report
12 February 1980	Consolidated Gold Fields Ltd.	24 July 1980
25 July 1980	Dunlop Holdings Ltd.	[1]18 December 1980 [2]10 March 1981 [2]12 November 1981
4 September 1980	Euroseas Securities Ltd.	5 March 1985
24 August 1981	Riafield Ltd.	30 December 1983
11 November 1981	Corporate Management Planning Ltd.	24 September 1986
8 March 1982	Euroflame Holding plc	27 June 1987
25 March 1982	Pharmaceutex (IV Fluid) Ltd. Drivehouse Ltd. Furdrove Ltd.	4 June 1986
10 May 1982	Cubar Construction Ltd.	28 August 1984
24 September 1982	Alexander Howden Group plc	[1]30 December 1985 [2]26 June 1987
8 November 1982	Minet Holdings plc	[1]7 April 1986
	WMD Underwriting Agencies Ltd.	[2]16 January 1990
19 November 1982	Signal Life Assurance Co. Ltd.	16 November 1988
11 November 1983	Graylaw Holdings Ltd. Link Service Stations Ltd.	28 November 1989
	British Anzani plc	28 November 1989
6 April 1983	The Greenbank Trust plc	28 June 1985
4 October 1983	Bank Street Securities Ltd	28 November 1989
	Pennine Commercial Holdings plc	[1]28 November 1989
25 February 1983	Hartley Baird plc	21 December 1983
7 June 1983	Westminster Property Group plc	17 October 1985
23 August 1983	House of Fraser plc	[1]23 July 1984
16 February 1984	Medway Secondary Metals Ltd.	21 October 1987
3 September 1984	Emray plc (now Equity & General plc)	9 December 1987

Date of appointment	Company name	Date of report
9 May 1985	Hartley Baird plc	23 May 1986
27 August 1985	Milbury plc	26 August 1987
27 September 1985	Aldershot Football Club Ltd.	2 March 1987
26 November 1985	Westminster Property Group plc	26 August 1987
7 February 1986	Sumrie Clothes plc (now Summer International plc)	31 May 1988
28 November 1986	Guinness plc	[1]24 November 1988
10 December 1986	Consolidated Gold Fields plc	30 September 1988
10 February 1987	Bremner plc	23 December 1988
9 April 1987	House of Fraser Holdings plc	23 July 1988
20 November 1987	The Animal Defence Society Ltd.	23 December 1989
16 August 1988	Rotaprint plc	8 March 1991
24 August 1988	Aldermanbury Trust plc	[1]20 December 1988 [2]11 December 1990
20 October 1988	Consolditated Gold Fields plc	[1]13 January 1989 [3]5 April 1989
19 December 1988	County NatWest Ltd. County NatWest Securities Ltd.	12 July 1989
9 March 1989	Sound Diffusion plc	25 February 1991
26 May 1989	Blue Arrow plc	4 June 1991
23 June 1989	The Bestwood plc Atlanta Fund Managers Ltd.	26 March 1991
30 June 1989	The Milford Docks Company	30 September 1991
6 February 1990	BOM Holdings plc	2 August 1991

[1] Interim.
[2] Final.
[3] Second Interim.

Political Parties (Donations)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any proposals for legislation under which the approval of a company's employees would be needed before a company could make any financial donations to political parties.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any proposals for legislation under which companies making losses would be forbidden from making donations to political parties.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many auditing firms are regulated by the recognised supervisory bodies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: At 12 May some 16,000 firms were registered with supervisory bodies under the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any plans to propose legislation under which an independent statutory body would be responsible for appointing auditors to major companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any proposals for legislation under which external auditors would be prevented from *(a)* performing actuarial tasks for their audit clients and *(b)* recruiting directors for their audit clients.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. It is a condition for recognition under part II of and schedule 11 to the Companies Act 1989 that supervisory bodies must have adequate rules and practices regarding the professional integrity and independence of company auditors. In addition shareholders will in future have information provided under the Companies Act 1985 (Disclosure of Remuneration for Non-Audit Work) Regulations 1991, which require companies that are not small or medium-sized to disclose in their accounts the remuneration of their auditors and their associates for non-audit work for the company and its associated undertakings.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any proposals for requiring all major public limited companies to have *(a)* internal audit departments and *(b)* audit committees.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. These are matters for individual companies.

Fraud

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will propose legislation under which auditors will have a statutory duty to detect and report material fraud.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: All auditors should apply the guidance in the auditing guideline issued in February 1990 on the auditor's responsibility in relation to fraud, other irregularities and errors. If an auditor does not apply the guidance in any particular case, he must be prepared to explain why he has failed to do so. The guideline makes it clear that where the auditor is aware of matters of concern and does not have confidence that they will be properly dealt with by management, he should, if he considers that disclosure should be made in the public interest, disclose the matters to the appropriate authorities.

British Coal

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps his Department has undertaken recently to ensure that the pensions of both current and past British Coal employees are fully protected following privatisation of the industry.

Mr. Eggar: No decisions have yet been taken on the details of the privatisation, but the Government have already made it clear that pension entitlements will be safeguarded.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the progress of current negotiations with National Power and PowerGen about the future of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: The negotiations are a commercial matter between British Coal and the generating companies. It is in the interests of all concerned that there should be the earliest possible resolution of these negotiations.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if any current safety provisions in deep-mining collieries will be subject to change following privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: Safety provisions relating to the coal industry are the responsibility of the Health and Safety Commission. I have therefore now formally written to the

chairman of the commission to seek its advice on safety matters in the context of coal privatisation. The Government are determined that health and safety should remain of paramount importance in the privatised coal mining industry.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to discuss privatisation of British Coal with the National Union of Mineworkers.

Mr. Eggar: As I made clear in the House on 18 May, I will be writing to bodies directly involved in the coal industry, including the National Union of Mineworkers, seeking their views on the privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the amount per year paid out to all bodies for advice on coal privatisation since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: No payments were made to outside bodies for advice on coal privatisation before 1991-92. In that year expenditure on such advice was £3·3 million.

Timber

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to allow the import of illegally extracted timbers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: There are restrictions on imports into the United Kingdom of a limited range of timber covered by the internationally-agreed Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Otherwise, it is for countries concerned to enforce their own laws on illegal extraction of timber, not for the United Kingdom to attempt to do so at our external frontier. We do not, however, take lightly the threat posed to the environment by the destruction of tropical forests, hence our policy of fostering sustainable management of these important resources.

Unit Pricing

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he intends to forward the EC proposal on ranges for prescribed quantities and unit pricing during the United Kingdom presidency; and when he expects it to be adopted by the European Commission.

Mr. Leigh: Although my officials have recently urged the Commission to reconvene discussions, the Commission has indicated that it does not expect to make a formal proposal to the Council this year.

Trawsfynydd Power Station

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to publish the nuclear safety cases relating to Trawsfynydd nuclear power station.

Mr. Eggar: The comprehensive safety case which Nuclear Electric plc—NE—has prepared in respect of Trawsfynydd nuclear power station is known as a long-term safety review—LTSR. The nuclear installations inspectorate—NII—which is part of the Health and Safety Executive—HSE—regards the LTSR as providing the primary basis for judging the adequacy of NE's case for the continued operation of Trawsfynydd.

The responsibility for carrying out and reporting on the LTSR is placed on the nuclear site licensee. The question of the publication of the safety case is thus a matter for NE. However, the HSE has to date examined and published the NII's findings on five such LTSRs undertaken in respect of other Magnox stations. The Trawsfynydd LTSR is the next one scheduled for publication.

Energy Technology

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what scientific advice on energy technologies and strategies is provided to his Department.

Mr. Eggar: The Department has a wide range of advisory bodies with external membership offering advice on particular technological areas and on the broad balance of the Department's energy research and development programmes. The Department also has its own specialist staff who offer advice on energy issues and run the R and D programmes for the energy sector.

Department of Energy (Chief Scientist)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the former chief scientist to the Department of Energy has been relocated to his Department.

Mr. Eggar: Yes.

Wind Energy

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress his Department has made towards establishing a demonstration off-shore wind energy plant similar to that already established in waters off Denmark.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 19 May 1992]:* The Government have no plans for an offshore wind energy plant similar to the one recently built in Denmark.

Assisted Area Boundaries

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will employ criteria other than travel-to-work areas in reviewing assisted area boundaries; and if he will take account of unemployment blackspots.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 19 May 1992]:* The Government announced before the election that a review of the assisted areas map would be conducted early in this Parliament. We are now considering how to take this forward and looking at the criteria to be applied. I hope to make an announcement on this shortly.

EDUCATION

Illiteracy

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the extent of adult illiteracy in the United Kingdom; what definition he uses of illiteracy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: There are very few adults in the United Kingdom who cannot read or write at all, but there are substantial numbers who cannot cope with the demands of everyday life. They cannot, for example, fill in forms, check payslips or give the correct change. Such people are often described as being "functionally illiterate".

The adult literacy and basic skills unit—ALBSU—which advises the Government, estimates that 5·5 million people in England and Wales have some difficulty with reading, writing, spelling and basic mathematics. That cannot be a precise figure, but there is no doubt that there are still many people requiring help.

The Government give high priority to basic skills education for adults—that is literacy and numeracy. Local education authorities are currently the main providers of this, but central Government also give support, to ALBSU and through a number of central initiatives. Grants to ALBSU have increased more than sixfold over the past decade, to over £3 million in 1992-93.

The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 strengthens the position of basic skills. The further education funding councils will be under a specific duty to secure adequate provision of basic skills education for adults.

Such provision should make the best use of whatever facilities and expertise are available and should be readily accessible to local communities.

Religion

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has for the strengthening of the position of religious instruction in the national curriculum and of religious worship in the daily timetable of state schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend strongly supports the requirements, as statutorily defined, for all registered pupils at maintained schools to study religious education as part of the basic curriculum, and to attend a daily act of collective worship, subject to their parents' right to withdraw them from these activities.

The Education Reform Act 1988 reaffirmed religious education and collective worship as matters for determination by local, rather than national, bodies. I welcome the National Curriculum Council's support for the role of local bodies and its intention to monitor the additional contribution of the national curriculum to the general aim of promoting pupils' spiritual and moral development, set out in section 1 of that Act.

Derwent System Buildings

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what priority he intends to give in future capital expenditure allocations to the replacement of Derwent system school buildings.

Mr. Forth: Capital resources for local authority maintained schools are distributed on the basis of national priority criteria. These give priority to the second and third-year costs of work approved under earlier allocations, new school places needed in areas of population growth and projects to remove surplus places. The remaining resources are then largely distributed to contribute towards the cost of all other capital work including improvement and replacement projects. Priority in making allocations to grant-maintained schools has been given to projects required on urgent health and safety grounds.

Bids from GM schools to replace Derwent system school buildings will be considered on their merits. For voluntary aided and special agreement schools such replacement projects would be categorised as improvement work and it would be for the local education authority to determine the priority of each bid. Local education authorities are responsible for the state of county and voluntary controlled school buildings, and for deciding expenditure levels and priorities.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many Derwent system schools are in existence; and what is the estimated cost of replacing them at current prices to provide the same educational facilities.

Mr. Forth: Over the period 1952 to 1984, the Department recorded expenditure on 558 primary and secondary school projects in England and Wales that used the Derwent system. Local authorities could well have used the system for minor projects for which the Department has no records.

The cost of replacing the recorded uses of the system in permanent construction to current standards so as to provide the same educational facilities is estimated to be between £300 million and £450 million at current prices.

These costs take no account of cases where such accommodation has been taken out of use.

Further Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each further education college and sixth-form college its revenue budget, and capital allocation for *(a)* 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92 and *(c)* 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Information on revenue budgets is not currently available in the form requested. I will write to the hon. Member with the figures for the delegated budget for 1990-91 and 1991-92 for each of the LEA maintained or assisted colleges that will be entering the new further education sector on 1 April 1993. These figures are contained in local authorities' budget statements made available under sections 42 and 147 of the Education Reform Act 1988. Information for 1992-93 is not yet available.

I am today placing in the Library details of allocations for major building projects for further education colleges for 1990-91 and 1991-92 and provisional allocations for 1992-93, together with notional supplementary credit approvals to LEAS for 1992-93 in respect of sixth-form colleges. Annual capital guidelines for sixth form colleges for 1990-91 and 1991-92 could not be disaggregated from the information available to the Department. Allocations for minor works and equipments for further education colleges for the three years requested could not be disaggregated without disproportionate cost.

Teachers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the figures at January 1992 in England for teacher vacancies and teacher numbers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Tables showing vacancies by region, by grade in primary schools and by subject in secondary schools have been placed in the Library. In total, for January 1992, LEAs and schools in England provisionally reported 1,117 full-time vacancies in maintained nursery and primary schools and 838 full-time vacancies in

secondary schools, equivalent to vacancy rates of 0·6 per cent. of teachers in service in nursery and primary schools, and 0·5 per cent. of teachers in service in secondary schools. The total of 1,955 vacancies represents 0·6 per cent. of full-time teachers in service. Provisional teacher numbers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools and grant-maintained schools rose by 0·1 per cent. from 394,900 full-time equivalent teachers in January 1991 to 395,300; this gives an estimated overall pupil-teacher ratio of 17·4:1.

EMPLOYMENT

TVEI

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, by local education authority, the funding for the technical and vocational education initiative for 1991-92 and 1992-93 at 1991 prices.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following table gives financial allocations by local education authority. The 1991-92 figures are at cash prices. The 1992-93 figures are those before the annual uprating of 2·5 per cent.

TVEI extension
Allocations by LEA at 1991-92 prices

	1991-92	*1992-93*
Barking and Dagenham	519,107	453,905
Barnet	432,000	1,030,029
Bexley	563,653	616,746
Brent	163,000	341,727
Bromley	783,439	802,428
Camden	111,000	232,013
Croydon	747,282	652,320
Ealing	778,498	576,107
Enfield	738,188	648,817
Greenwich	163,000	342,113
Hackney	35,000	96,000
Hammersmith/Fulham	73,009	200,704
Haringey	130,000	273,200
Harrow	362,000	635,000
Havering	751,475	701,694
Hillingdon	503,000	780,000
Hounslow	163,000	341,727
Islington	35,000	79,000
Kensington/Chelsea	33,451	86,500
Kingston	382,683	411,911
Lambeth	35,000	81,000
Lewisham	138,000	289,013
Merton	236,000	530,300
Newham	506,000	786,000
Redbridge	400,000	898,587
Richmond	341,326	358,548
Southwark	122,000	255,000
Sutton	192,301	290,000
Tower Hamlets	128,000	267,483
Waltham Forest	179,000	375,730
Wandsworth	35,000	115,000
Westminster	16,584	99,416
Berkshire	2,176,954	1,902,346
Buckinghamshire	1,743,573	1,534,605
Essex	3,905,495	4,058,849
Hampshire	4,889,965	3,954,590
Hertfordshire	2,523,601	1,726,177
Isle of Wight	321,880	305,270
Kent	4,624,086	3,765,130
Oxfordshire	1,637,924	1,439,356
Surrey	2,361,053	2,261,549
East Sussex	1,354,721	1,234,970
West Sussex	1,799,699	1,744,132
Avon	1,862,462	2,917,637
Cornwall	1,370,619	1,419,200
Devon	2,691,612	2,560,633
Dorset	1,030,000	1,605,270
Gloucester	1,191,388	1,132,203
Somerset	1,156,022	964,915
Wiltshire	1,634,046	1,446,332
Bedfordshire	1,326,900	1,040,457
Cambridgeshire	1,643,248	1,581,215
Derbyshire	2,237,800	2,454,500
Leicestershire	2,869,913	373,384
Lincolnshire	979,000	1,838,750
Norfolk	2,099,148	1,833,340
Northamptonshire	1,662,516	1,352,196
Nottinghamshire	1,401,000	3,519,361
Suffolk	1,807,075	1,487,685
Birmingham	3,656,944	2,567,711
Coventry	897,049	870,127
Dudley	961,203	650,088
Hereford	2,325,000	2,148,000
Sandwell	945,019	915,067
Shropshire	1,724,075	1,280,711
Solihull	783,300	685,500
Staffordshire	3,311,440	1,690,720
Walsall	925,975	1,057,966
Warwickshire	1,364,433	879,186
Wolverhampton	260,888	542,909
Bolton	840,000	893,000
Bury	568,232	568,760
Cheshire	2,771,549	2,824,080
Cumbria	1,315,934	1,511,439
Knowsley	395,000	760,000
Lancashire	2,438,000	5,997,168
Liverpool	457,000	927,173
Manchester	1,366,863	1,278,611
Oldham	229,000	478,000
Rochdale	731,292	706,325
St. Helens	581,218	681,524
Salford	960,765	629,641
Sefton	278,000	581,443
Stockport	844,569	839,315
Tameside	684,266	700,214
Trafford	179,000	375,730
Wigan	1,026,565	1,022,363
Wirral	929,027	865,541
Barnsley	722,345	720,984
Bradford	920,690	303,659
Calderdale	736,488	635,628
Doncaster	800,000	1,050,000
Humberside	1,751,000	3,515,318
Kirklees	392,000	1,356,000
Leeds	653,000	1,100,000
North Yorkshire	1,946,299	1,880,491
Rotherham	640,000	1,156,774
Sheffield	1,564,213	1,886,513
Wakefield	924,340	984,590
Cleveland	1,684,137	1,709,035
Durham	1,967,409	1,775,634
Gateshead	507,770	581,892
Newcastle	702,042	702,042
North Tyne	452,113	360,468
Northumberland	792,377	384,292
South tyne	450,392	439,621
Sunderland	839,202	572,126
Clwyd	1,420,271	1,374,252
Dyfed	999,916	1,054,662
Mid Glamorgan	1,527,794	1,438,991
South Glamorgan	1,343,969	1,328,749
West Glamorgan	1,299,225	787,998
Gwent	1,642,127	1,463,521
Gwynedd	754,720	564,757
Powys	405,659	430,173
Argyll and Bute	49,000	154,570

	1991-92	1992-93
Ayr	743,475	1,482,923
Borders	281,068	235,839
Central	552,450	1,190,472
Dumbarton	710,650	1,405,200
Dumfries/Galloway	441,525	184,005
Fife	1,002,410	913,329
Glasgow	2,601,997	2,198,377
Grampian	457,000	1,625,853
Highland	482,950	829,740
Lanark	1,418,750	2,799,234
Lothian	1,851,961	1,421,861
Orkney	26,000	110,700
Renfrew	801,977	808,043
Shetland	26,000	130,688
Tayside	776,750	1,638,220
Western Isles	33,000	150,368

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the funding for the technical and vocational education initiative for 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 at 1991 prices.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is as follows:

	(£ million)
1990-91	143·5
1991-92	154·6
1992-93	137·9

Women's Issues

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what work she is doing to advance women's issues.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Following the transfer of responsibility for co-ordinating Government policy on women's issues to my Department, I am setting up a small high level working group to advise me—in a personal capacity—on issues relevant to women's opportunities in the workplace and beyond. I shall also be chairing the new Ministerial Sub-Committee on Women's Issues, announced yesterday by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I shall be considering through both these mechanisms particular areas where I shall be looking to achieve measurable improvements in women's progress.

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about how she intends to fulfil her responsibility for co-ordinating Government action on issues of particular concern to women.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have today set up a small high level working group to advise me on some of the issues relevant to women's opportunities, both in the workplace and beyond, and to raise their public profile. The group who will report to me in a personal capacity, have a wealth of varied knowledge and experience. The group will supplement the work of the new Ministerial Sub-Committee on Women's Issues announced yesterday by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, which I shall chair, and the work of the Women's National Commission which will continue to represent the concerns of women to the Government. I consider it important to have the views of all sections of society in order to develop effective policies on the range of matters that are important to women in their daily lives.

The machinery now in place will also carry forward the work of the Advisory Committee on Women's Employment, which will not be reconstituted.

SOCIAL SECURITY

State Earnings-related Pension Scheme

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out in the same format as his answer on 11 November 1991, *Official Report*, column *399*, the weekly additional pension, SERPS, payable to men and women on average earnings, in each year since the scheme began to the present year 1992-93.

Miss Widdecombe: The table shows the amount of additional pension payable to men and women with age specific male and female average earnings respectively throughout their working lives retiring in each year from the start of the scheme—1979—to the present year 1992-93.

The amounts shown in table 1 have been revalued to 1992 prices. As the previous answer showed amounts from 1991 to 2061 in 1991 prices that table, too, is shown in its updated form, table 2.

Table 1

Year reaching pension age	£ (rounded to nearest 5p)	
	Men	Women
1979	2·00	1·35
1980	4·10	2·70
1981	6·55	4·35
1982	9·60	6·35
1983	12·00	7·85
1984	15·00	9·70
1985	18·40	11·80
1986	21·30	13·55
1987	25·75	16·25
1988	30·25	19·00
1989	35·00	21·85
1990	40·20	25·15
1991	42·55	26·50
1992	48·75	30·15

Table 2

Year reaching pension age	£ (rounded to nearest 5p)	
	Men	Women
1993	54·35	33·60
1994	59·65	36·85
1995	65·05	40·10
1996	70·70	43·45
1997	76·55	47·05
1998	82·50	50·55
1999	84·60	51·95
2000	85·70	52·65
2001	86·65	53·30
2002	87·50	54·00
2003	88·20	54·65
2004	88·80	55·25
2005	89·20	55·70
2006	89·50	56·05
2007	89·65	56·35
2008	89·60	56·65
2009	89·15	56·75
2010	89·80	57·70
2011	90·40	58·70
2012	90·90	59·60
2013	91·30	60·35
2014	91·70	61·05
2015	91·90	61·60
2016	92·10	62·15
2017	92·20	62·60

Year reaching pension age	£ (rounded to nearest 5p) Men	Women
2018	92·15	62·90
2019	92·05	63·15
2020	91·85	63·30
2021	91·55	63·40
2022	91·15	63·50
2023	90·55	64·25
2024	89·90	65·10
2025	89·00	65·90
2026	88·00	66·85
2027	86·85	67·80
2028	86·85	68·75
2029	86·80	69·75
2030	86·75	70·80
2031	86·85	71·80
2032	86·90	72·75
2033	87·05	73·85
2034	87·20	74·85
2035	87·35	75·85
2036	87·55	76·80
2037	87·75	77·75
2038	88·15	78·65
2039	88·50	79·55
2040	88·85	80·25
2041	89·20	80·80
2042	89·55	81·40
2043	89·90	81·95
2044	90·20	82·45
2045	90·55	82·95
2046	90·85	83·45
2047	91·20	83·90
2048	91·50	84·35
2049	91·75	84·80
2050	92·05	85·20
2051	92·35	85·60
2052	92·65	85·95
2053	92·90	86·30
2054	93·20	86·65
2055	93·45	87·00
2056	93·75	87·35
2057	93·95	87·65
2058	94·20	88·00
2059	94·45	88·30
2060	94·70	88·60
2061	94·95	88·90

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the reply of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *46*, when the enabling legislation to introduce the employer debt provision for occupational pensions set out in schedule 4, paragraph 2, of the Social Security Act 1990 was laid before Parliament.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 18 May at column *28*.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

India

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide details of the proportion of British aid-funded projects in India that experienced cost and time overruns for the period 1984 to date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Such information has been recorded centrally since November 1988 for projects costing more than £250,000. Of 19 projects completed in India, four experienced cost overruns, eight time overruns, and three others both cost and time overruns.

Liberia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the current levels of aid to Liberia; what have been the levels for each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In this financial year we plan to spend around £500,000 on humanitarian aid to Liberians, there and in Sierra Leone in response to the continuing emergency situation in Liberia, and approximately £45,000 on training of Liberian students in the United Kingdom.

Bilateral aid provided to Liberia in previous years is as follows:

Financial year	£
1987-88	716,000
1988-89	737,000
1989-90	507,000
1990-91	571,000
[1]1991-92	726,000

[1] Estimate.

Our technical co-operation programme, including new training awards, was withdrawn in 1990 because of the civil war. We have no plans to reinstate the programme.

Malaysia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement explaining the contents and purposes of the memorandum of understanding to be signed between Her Majesty's Government and the Malaysian Government on 15 May; and what account has been taken of the views expressed in the World bank and International Timber Trade Organisation reports and those of local people.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave on 18 May 1992, at column *16*. In drawing up the memorandum of understanding we took account of the views expressed by other interested parties.

Malawi

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will suspend participation of the Overseas Development Administration in forthcoming aid agencies meetings concerning Malawi until Mr. Chakufwa Chihana is released.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have made clear to the Malawi Government our intention strictly to limit future aid, other than for humanitarian purposes, pending substantial improvement of its human rights record. It is important nevertheless to maintain dialogue. International meetings, such as that held under World bank auspices in Paris last week, are of value both for this purpose and in demonstrating the strength of donor concern about human rights issues.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Refuseniks

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made on behalf of refusenik Yefim Gurevich and his family of Vitebsk.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can certainly raise with the Belorussian authorities the case of refusenik Yefim Gurevich and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made on behalf of refusenik Grigory Narovliansky and his family of Penza.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of refusenik Grigory Narovliansky and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made on behalf of refusenik Mikhail Moreynis and his family of Kiev.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Ukranian authorities the case of refusenik Mikhail Moreynis and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made on behalf of refusenik Anatoly Soloviyev and his family of Moscow.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of refusenik Anatoly Soloviyev and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Crimes against Humanity

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will press for amendment of the statute of the International Court of Justice to permit the trial before the court of individuals accused of grave crimes against humanity.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The question of the establishment of an international criminal court is under consideration by the International Law Commission. The Government are following closely the commission's deliberations on the various proposals which have been put forward. The statute of the International Court of Justice provides that only states may be parties in cases before the court.

EC Presidency

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will outline his objectives during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The primary objective will be to manage Community and inter-Governmental business efficiently and effectively.

Key policy themes of the United Kingdom presidency will be:

completion of the single market, with the emphasis on public procurement, insurance and transport and energy liberalisation;
the future financing negotiations;
preparation for enlargement negotiations;
developing relations with eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Diplomatic Relations

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all countries which the United Kingdom has recognised since January 1989 and the dates of recognition, stating in each case the current status of diplomatic representation in the United Kingdom and in the country concerned, including the name of any other state through which the diplomatic relations are maintained.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The states that have been recognised by Her Majesty's Government since January 1989 area listed in the table, with their respective dates of recognition.

Country	*Date of recognition*
Namibia	21 March 1990
Marshall Islands	1 August 1991
Micronesia	1 August 1991
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	8 August 1991
Estonia	27 August 1991
Latvia	27 August 1991
Lithuania	27 August 1991
Armenia	31 December 1991
Azerbaijan	31 December 1991
Belorussia	31 December 1991
Kazakhstan	31 December 1991
Moldavia	31 December 1991
Turkmenistan	31 December 1991
Ukraine	31 December 1991
Uzbekistan	31 December 1991
Croatia	15 January 1992
Slovenia	15 January 1992
Kyrgyzstan	15 January 1992
Tajikistan	15 January 1992
Georgia	23 March 1992
Bosnia-Herzegovina	7 April 1992

In the case of Namibia, there was no formal recognition of statehood, but it was implicit in the establishment of diplomatic relations in March 1990. The United Kingdom has diplomatic relations with all the states listed except for Croatia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The United Kingdom has resident ambassadors in Namibia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. There is a chargé d'affaires in Ukraine pending the arrival of an ambassador next month. Her Majesty's ambassador in Moscow is accredited to Armenia, Kazakhstan and Georgia. His successor will, in addition, apply for accreditation to Azerbaijan, Belorussia, Moldavia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Namibia, Lithuania and Slovenia have resident ambassadors in London. Estonia, Latvia and Armenia are represented by chargés d'affaires.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a summary table showing in respect of their legislative capacity *(a)* those topics or subjects where the Council of Ministers of

the European Community take, or will take, decisions currently by qualified majority, *(b)* additional matters or topics which will be so subject in the event of ratification of the treaty on European Union, *(c)* any matter currently decided by unanimity, or common accord, which will be subject to qualified majority vote in the event of ratification of the treaty on European union, *(d)* those legislative matters or topics, however initially decided, that will be subject to the ultimate power of disposal by the European Parliament acting in its own right, indicating how each topic would be decided by the Council of Ministers, and indicating, where applicable, both the relevant articles of the treaty of Rome as currently in force, and those article numbers relevant to each procedure that would be applicable in the event of the ratification of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The articles under which the Council of Ministers may currently act by qualified majority are set out in the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act.

The union Treaty provides for the Council to act by qualified majority additionally under the following articles;

73c(2), 73f, 73g(1), 73g(2), 75, 103(2), 103(4), 103(5), 103a(2), 104a(2), 104b(2), 104c(6), 104c(14)—economic policy;
105a(2), 106(5), 106(6), 109(1), 109(2), 109(3), 109(4)—monetary policy;
109c(3), 109f(6), 109h(2), 109h(3), 109i(3), 109j(2), 109j(3)—economic and monetary union;
100c(2) and (3)—common visa list, from 1996, common format visa, emergency measures;
126—education;
127—vocational training, currently simple majority under article 128;
129—public health;
129a—consumer protection;
129d—trans-European networks;
130i(4)—research and development specific programmes;
130s—most aspects of the environment, currently unanimity unless all member states agree to use QMV;
130w—development;
138e—Ombudsman's terms of reference;
194—allowances for members of the Economic and Social Committee;
228(1), 228(2)—conclusion of international agreements on subjects where internal decision-making is by QMV, codifies existing practice;
228a—sanctions.

Decisions under article 104c, (7), (8), (9), (11) and (12) will be taken by two thirds majority of weighted votes.

These changes are parallelled where appropriate in the revisions to the ECSC and Euratom treaties—titles III and IV of the union treaty. There are no cases where a requirement for common accord has been replaced by one for qualified majority.

The Council is at present required to obtain the positive assent of the European Parliament before acting under articles 237 and 238 of the treaty of Rome. The treaty on European union extends that procedure to the following articles:

Article 8a,
Article 130d,
Article 138,
Article 228(3),
Article 106(5) and
Article 105(6).

In addition, under the negative assent procedure the European Parliament will have the right ultimately to reject, but not amend, a legislative proposal under article 189b of the treaty on European union. This procedure will apply to article 49, article 54(2), article 56(2)d, article 57(1), article 57(2), article 100a, article 126, article 128—with unanimity—article 129, article 129a, article 129d, Article 130i—with unanimity—article 130s(3).

Liberia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government in Liberia concerning human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. Since the civil war broke out in 1990, there has been no effective Liberian Government to whom we could make representations.

Malawi

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Malawian Government for the immediate release of Mr. Chakufwa Chinana and support joint EC initiatives to this end.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Representations to the Malawi Government calling for the immediate release of Chakufwa Chinana were made jointly by EC heads of mission in Lilongwe on 10 April. They were assured that Mr. Chinana's personal safety was not in question and that he would be charged and tried without undue delay.

HEALTH

Smoking

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many smokers each week *(a)* die and *(b)* give up smoking; and how many people start smoking.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available centrally in the form requested. It is estimated that in the United Kingdom about 2,100 deaths each week are smoking related.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the incidence of severe congenital malformations in the children of *(a)* smoking and *(b)* non-smoking fathers.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the proportion of doctors who smoke in each European Community country.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1989, the percentages of general medical practitioners in the European Community who smoked were as follows:

	Per cent.
Belgium	28
Denmark	38
West Germany	24
Greece	39
Spain	44
France	31
Ireland	20
Italy	41
Luxembourg	36
Netherlands	29

	Per cent.
Portugal	39
United Kingdom	10

Source: Commission of the European Communities, 1989.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the differential levels of smoking of children of smokers, and non-smokers.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in its 1990 survey of smoking among secondary school children reported that, in England, children whose parents both smoked were two and a half times as likely to be regular smokers as were those who said neither of their parents smoked—15 per cent. and 6 per cent. respectively. Children reporting one smoking parent fell between these two levels while the behaviour of the mother seemed to have a stronger influence than that of the father. The full report of this survey—"Smoking Among Secondary School Children in 1990", OPCS, HMSO 1991—is available in the Library.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the tax and the retail price of cigarettes in each European Community country.

Dr. Mawhinney: The retail price, duty and total tax, including VAT, of the most popular pack of 20 cigarettes in each EC country as at February 1992 is shown in the table.

	Price (pence)	Duty	Total tax (inc. VAT)
Belgium	113	75	82
Denmark	233	158	200
France	104	54	71
Germany	146	89	107
Greece	42	19	30
Ireland	215	124	161
Italy	87	49	63
Luxembourg	81	50	58
Netherlands	104	58	74
Portugal	60	36	45
Spain	32	15	18
United Kingdom	208	124	155

Vitamin K Injections

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure parents are offered a clear choice over the vitamin K injection for their own newly born children; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department expects that clinicians would discuss this aspect of a baby's management with the parents. They would need to explain to them the clear benefits of vitamin K in protecting the newborn child from serious bleeding which can sometimes result in permanent brain damage and, occasionally, death.

The Department is considering with the British Paediatric Association and research workers the need for further research to clarify the implications for neonatal care of a possible association between intramuscular injection of vitamin K and childhood cancer.

Fluoridation

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the progress that has been made in artifically increasing the fluoride content of the water supply in England during the most recent 12-month period for which information is available.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for health authorities to apply to water undertakers to increase the levels of fluoride in water supplies, following local consultation. Information on the progress made is not collected centrally.

Repetitive Strain Injuries

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action her Department has taken to investigate the nature of treatment of repetitive strain injuries.

Mr. Yeo: The nature of treatment of repetitive strain injuries is a matter for individual clinicians.

Child Care

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how she intends to respond to the recommendation on child care adopted by the European Council of Ministers; and whether she intends to review policy in terms of (i) the reconciliation of employment and caring for children, (ii) early childhood care and education services and (iii) funding for (i) and (ii).

Mr. Yeo: The recommendation which was adopted on 31 March 1992 calls on member states to report back to the Commission on the steps taken in response to the matters covered in the articles by March 1995.

The recommendation will inform the continuing debate about child care and other means of helping parents reconcile work and family responsibilities.

The relevant Departments will be working together in considering the United Kingdom's response and we intend to draw the recommendation to the attention of local authorities, employers' organisations, business interests, child care providers and organisations representing their interests and voluntary organisations.

Purchasing Consortia

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the Northern regional health authority's proposal to establish new purchasing consortia arrangements across the region.

Mr. Sackville: The Northern regional health authority (RHA), its district health authorities (DHAs) and family health services authorities are considering the best way to develop DHAs' central role in purchasing health care on behalf of their residents; including the possibility of joint working with neighbouring authorities. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Peter Carr, chairman of Northern RHA, for more information.

Greenwich Health Service

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date the consultation exercise on the proposed application by Greenwich health service for trust status began; on what date copies of the consultation paper were available for distribution to the public; and if she will make a statement on the adequacy of arrangements for consultation on this matter.

Dr. Mawhinney: The public consultation exercise for Greenwich Healthcare's application for NHS trust status began on 14 May 1992. The application document was available from the same date.

The South East Thames regional health authority, which is responsible for the consultation process, has distributed over 340 copies of the document to a wide range of individuals and organisations. Anyone who has not received a copy may obtain one from the regional health authority.

SCOTLAND

Development Area, Borders

21. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to grant development area status to the borders region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: We announced before the election that a review of the assisted areas map would be conducted at the beginning of this Parliament. We are currently considering how to take this commitment forward and hope to make an announcement shortly. I can however assure the hon. Gentleman that the needs of all areas—including the borders—will be given very full and careful consideration in the review.

Fishing

22. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to meet representatives of west coast fishing associations to discuss problems relating to the fishing industry.

Sir Hector Monro: I have already met a delegation from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation which represents many west coast fishermen. I intend to meet as many groups from all parts of Scotland as I can over the next few months to listen to their concerns.

Strathclyde Police

23. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to meet Strathclyde regional council to discuss police manning levels in Strathclyde.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. It is the responsibility of the council to provide the resources to enable Strathclyde police to be manned up to the establishment level authorised by the council.

33. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average time taken for police officers at D Division of Strathclyde police to respond to emergency calls by members of the public.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not currently available. The recording of response times to emergency calls received by Strathclyde police is being developed on the force's new command and control system.

Youth (Local Authority Care)

24. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy for 16-year-olds leaving the care of local authorities.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The needs of young people leaving care are among the major issues which we have under review and which will figure in a White Paper on child care law and policy later this year. My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State has responded to a separate letter from the hon. Member on the subject.

Constitutional Reform

25. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland with which bodies he has had discussions since 10 April on Scotland's constitutional future.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has held no such discussions.

26. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to a systematic, thorough but rapid study of the constitutional position of Scotland within the framework of the whole of the United Kingdom.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government are giving careful consideration to ways of making the government of Scotland more responsive to Scotland's needs within the framework of an integrated United Kingdom and will report the results to the House.

28. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received on the issue of a multi-option referendum on the future constitutional arrangements for the government of Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since 9 April, my right hon. Friend has received 24 letters about the holding of a referendum on the future government of Scotland, of which 18 were in favour. One small petition has also been received.

Hospitals

27. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of those hospitals within the Lanarkshire health board area which have expressed an interest in seeking trust status.

Mr. Allan Stewart: A formal expression of interest in trust status has been made on behalf of the Monklands unit in Lanarkshire health board area. This unit comprises the Monklands district hospital and the Bellshill maternity hospital.

Overseas Visitors

29. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many overseas visitors came to Scotland in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Number of Overseas Visitors

Year	*(Millions)*
1989	1·44
1990	1·60
1991	1·60

Source: International passenger survey 1989-90. Scottish tourist board 1991.

Note: 1991 figure is an estimate provided by the Scottish tourist board and based on results for period January to September.

Scotland had its highest ever number of overseas visitors in 1990, as measured by the international passenger survey which commenced in 1961. While provisional figures for 1991 suggest that there has been no overall change, a significant reduction in visitors from long-haul markets, including north America, has been noted. This drop is likely to have been counterbalanced by an increase in visitors from Europe. Indications for 1992 suggest that the previous growth in overseas visitor numbers may be resumed.

Departmental Accountability

30. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any proposals to make the Scottish Office more accountable to the people of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Government are currently reviewing ways of making the Government more responsive to Scotland's needs within a strengthened United Kingdom.

Unemployment

31. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to alleviate the social problems surrounding unemployment in Renfrewshire and elsewhere in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The main responsibility for meeting the social welfare needs of an area rests with the social work authority which has a range of powers and facilities. The Government have provided for an increase for social work within aggregate external finance of 88 per cent. in real terms since 1979.

In addition, specific initiatives have been taken by my right hon. Friend in areas particularly affected by unemployment. For example, in Scotland's most deprived urban areas, the urban programme funds a wide variety of projects designed to reduce unemployment and its impact on local communities.

Moreover, Scottish Office-led partnership initiatives are implementing comprehensive economic, social and physical regeneration strategies in four disadvantaged peripheral housing estates, including Ferguslie park in Renfrew district. Emphasis has been placed on reducing the high levels of unemployment in these areas, particularly through the use of training courses tailored to the needs of local residents and offering sound prospects of employment on completion.

The most important contribution which can be made in areas affected by unemployment is the creation and attraction of new jobs and improving employment prospects for people living in the area. This is primarily a matter for the local enterprise company network. Renfrewshire Enterprise has a broad and flexible range of training and economic development powers and functions, and a budget this year of almost £24 million, to devote to its task. A number of schemes and projects are under way in the area to provide training for employment and create jobs.

Enterprise Culture

32. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to further encourage the enterprise culture in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The enterprise culture has deep roots in Scotland. The Government's economic and fiscal policies, which reward entrepreneurship and encourage investment and jobs throughout the United Kingdom, are stimulating its further growth; and local enterprise companies, under the supervision of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, are making a valuable and growing impact on the vigour of the enterprise culture at local level.

Care in the Community

34. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the funding of care in the community.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Our commitment to the funding of community care services was set out in the White Paper "Caring for People" (Cm 849). In 1993-94 the process of transferring resources from the Department of Social Security to local authorities to enable them to meet their new community care responsibilities, will begin. Already my right hon. Friend made provision in aggregate external finance of £11 million in 1991-92 and £21 million in 1992-93 in recognition of the additional costs to local authorities in implementing community care. He has also allocated £33 million to health boards over the years 1991-92 to 1994-95 by way of bridging finance to assist the movement of patients in long-stay hospitals into suitable provision within the community.

Investment (Technology)

35. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he would make a statement on investment in technology in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Government believe that it is primarily industry's own responsibility to assess its markets and take the necessary investment decisions, including in technology, to ensure its successful future development. The Government's overall aim is to encourage innovation by industry without creating or perpetuating distortions in the economy. However, we do recognise that companies, particularly small and medium-sized companies, require some external assistance. One form of this assistance is intended to support precompetitive collaborative research projects. Link is an interdepartmental example of this which encourages industry to undertake joint research with higher education institutions. Another example, geared specifically to companies with less than 50 employees is the competitive small firms merit award for research and technology (SMART) scheme. These examples are just two of the number of forms of assistance available throughout the United Kingdom under the banner of the enterprise initiative, operated by the Department of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

In more general terms, the principal form of investment assistance, available in Scotland under the Government's regional policy, is regional selective assistance (RSA). It is a discretionary grant available throughout the assisted

areas for investment projects which involve expansion, modernisation or rationalisation and which create or safeguard jobs. In addition, the investment grant element of the regional enterprise grants (REG) scheme provides a simplified form of support for companies with less than 25 employees. Similarly, for companies with up to 50 employees, the innovation grant element of REG provides —within a ceiling of £25,000 grant per project—up to 50 per cent. support towards the costs of innovation projects which lead to the development and introduction of new products or processes.

In addition to assistance from Government, Scotland is fortunate in having the infrastructure of Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the local enterprise companies. It is the remit of this network to further the development of Scotland's economy and its environment. This infrastructure provides the more local, and responsive, mechanism to address the various needs of industry, including stimulating investment.

Primary Schools, Testing

36. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to abolish national testing in Scottish primary schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I have given to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall).

Electoral Registration

37. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he holds on the numbers of people who had submitted electoral registration forms in time but who were not included on the final registration; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally. The decision whether or not to include an applicant on the electoral register rests entirely with the electoral registration officer for the area.

Mr. John Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many electors were registered for proxy or postal votes respectively; and how many proxy and postal votes were cast in each constituency in Scotland of the general election on 9 April.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on registration of proxy and postal votes is not held centrally. The numbers of postal votes—personal and proxy together—cast in each constituency will be published in due course by HMSO as part of a post-election House of Commons Command Paper "Election Expenses".

Investment (Steel)

38. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the Government's policy towards investment in new steel-making capacity in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Government would welcome any proposals which might lead to the continuation of steel production in Scotland, and we would urge British Steel to give very careful consideration to any bid that may be made for the re-use of any of its Scottish production facilities.

Land Ownership

39. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet representatives of Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage to discuss land ownership.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have at present no plans to meet either body to discuss this subject.

Lockerbie Bombing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations the Lord Advocate has received from the lawyers of Pan American Airways insurers relating to the bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, and alleged Libyan, Syrian and Iranian involvement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Lord Advocate has not received any representations from the lawyers of Pan American World Airways or its insurers on alleged Libyan, Syrian or Iranian involvement in the bombing of Pam Am flight 103 on 21 December 1988.

Economy (North-east)

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures the Government will take to encourage economic prosperity in north-east Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The area is among the more prosperous in Scotland. Oil-related employment in particular has increased sharply in recent years. Unemployment in the Aberdeen travel-to-work area has been consistently below the Scottish average and it has had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the United Kingdom—the second lowest in the United Kingdom in March 1992.

There are, however, encouraging signs of confidence in the North sea, with fabrication and engineering yards in Scotland currently working to near full capacity. In 1991, direct offshore employment attained its second highest recorded level, 33,200 jobs, with United Kingdom nationals holding 93 per cent. of these.

Much of this is due to the Government's general economic and fiscal policies.

In addition, of course, the full range of the Government's training, employment and economic development initiatives are available in north-east Scotland through the local enterprise company network. The local enterprise companies have very substantial budgets at their disposal to encourage economic development and employment creation. Grampian Enterprise, for example, has a budget of over £20 million available this year.

Kennel Costs

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the maximum daily rate payable to procurators fiscal to keep a dog in kennels, as a production, while awaiting to hear a case in court.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am advised by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate that procurators fiscal are not paid any sum to keep a dog in kennels pending the hearing of the case in court. Where a

dog has been seized in connection with an offence and the procurator fiscal decides to take criminal proceedings the cost of keeping the dog in kennels pending the trial is the responsibility of the procurator fiscal. There is no maximum daily rate payable for keeping dogs in kennels in such circumstances. Arrangements are made locally between the procurator fiscal and the local kennel for the payment of a reasonable daily fee.

Disabled People (Housing)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by district council the amount of money spent on adaptations to the homes of disabled people in each of the last five years; and what contribution was made towards these costs from central Government funds.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* Both district council housing departments and regional council social work departments can contribute towards the costs of adapting the homes of disabled persons. Information is not held centrally on the expenditure by district councils.

Regional council social work department expenditure on adaptations to homes of disabled people in each of the last five years, where available was as follows:

Adaptations to property—provided by Scottish social work departments gross local authority expenditure (£000's)

Region	Year ended 31 March 1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Borders	n/a	43	53	77	65
Central	171	123	165	219	387
Dumfries/Galloway	106	73	12	n/a	n/a
Fife	280	419	646	n/a	606
Grampian	270	302	296	394	549
Highland	150	n/a	n/a	212	331
Lothian	305	375	317	542	523
Strathclyde	1,271	1,712	1,658	1,877	2,081
Tayside	155	93	188	190	278
Orkney	n/a	7	9	n/a	5
Shetland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Western Isles	n/a	30	25	20	42

Central Government funding for local authorities is paid in support of services in general. It is for local authorities to decide the appropriate level of expenditure to incur on individual services.

Gigha

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out in a table a breakdown of the main sources of employment of the inhabitants of Gigha; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 19 May 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

Sources of employment in Gigha

	Number
Farming	14
Fish farming	5
Hotel	[1]12
Estate workers	3
Gardeners	3
Shop workers	3
Fishermen	7

[1] In season.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Irish Beef

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the investigation into the consignment of Irish beef destined for Russia and found in Merseyside, indicating how much had already been bought by consumers.

Mr. Gummer: This matter is now the subject of an investigation by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. It would not be appropriate for me to comment since this could be prejudicial to the investigation.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will specify on a month-by-month basis since 1985 whether the pound sterling was or would have been within *(a)* the 2¼ per cent. band of the exchange rate mechanism; or *(b)* the 6 per cent. band.

Mr. Nelson: Sterling joined the exchange rate mechanism with effect from 8 October 1990 at a central deutschmark rate of DM 2·95 and with agreed bands of fluctuation of approximately ±6 per cent.

It is not clear what sterling's exchange rate would have been since 1985 if it had joined earlier.

Currency

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the designs of £10 and £20 notes, with particular reference to the indication of their denominations.

Mr. Nelson: The design of Bank of England notes is the responsibility of the bank. It advises that each denomination is a different size, carries identifying numerals, words and colours as well as, in the new series, a distinctive bold symbol on the front of each note specifically to assist the partially sighted and the elderly.

Mortgage Difficulties

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many schemes to turn owner-occupiers experiencing mortgage difficulties into tenants or shared owners have now been established, indicating the number of families assisted in each case.

Mr. Nelson: Seven mortgage-into-rent schemes have been established through which existing borrowers can become tenants, and six of these are by the largest mortgage lenders. Lenders are also developing other rescue schemes such as shared appreciation mortgages, where the lender takes part payment of the mortgage in return for a share in the equity gains from the sale of the property.

Many separate discussions are now under way between borrowers and lenders about which arrangements are most appropriate for dealing with the difficulties raised by individual cases. It is too early to say how many families are likely to be helped by particular measures, but the Government remain keenly interested in developments.

The Chancellor, along with the Secretary of State for Environment, will meet representatives of the major lenders on 2 June to review progress.

Wine (Tax)

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the level of taxation changes in each of the past 10 years on table wine (75 cl); sparkling wine (70 cl); sherry (70 cl); port (70 cl); and spirits at 40 per cent. (75 cl), showing the total percentage increase over the period as a separate table.

Sir John Cope: Changes in the level of taxation, measured as excise duty plus consequential VAT, in each of the last 10 years are as follows:

Percentages (April)

	Table wine	*Sparkling wine*	*Sherry*	*Port*	*Spirits*
1983	5·8	5·8	5·8	5·8	5·0
1984	−19·9	8·4	8·0	6·8	1·9
1985	8·3	8·3	7·3	6·3	1·9
1986	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
1987	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
1988	4·5	4·5	4·5	4·5	0·0
1989	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
1990	7·7	7·7	7·7	7·7	10·0
[1]1991	11·7	11·7	11·7	11·7	11·7
1992	4·5	4·5	4·5	4·5	4·5
1982-92	20·5	63·2	61·0	57·8	39·9

[1] Standard rate of VAT increased from 15 to 17·5 per cent.

Whisky

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the revenues which have accrued to the Exchequer through *(a)* domestic sales and *(b)* export sales of Scotch whisky in each of the past 10 years.

Sir John Cope: Estimated accruals of VAT and excise duty on domestic sales of United Kingdom produced whisky are shown in the table. Export sales of whisky do not yield excise or VAT revenue.

	£ billion
1982	0·8
1983	0·9
1984	0·9
1985	1·0
1986	1·0
1987	1·0
1988	1·0
1989	0·9
1990	1·0
1991	1·1

Delors Proposals

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in convenient summary form in respect of each numbered and named phase of the Delors proposals for economic and monetary union, the articles, protocol or chapter of the treaty on European union (Cm 1934), which relate to the implementation of each of the proposed phases together with the relevant page numbers in Cm 1934.

Mr. Nelson: The Delors committee report on economic and monetary union in the European Community suggested a three-stage approach to the development of EMU. The treaty on European union, as set out in Cm 1934, also adopts a three-stage approach to EMU, although this does not correspond exactly to the Delors proposals. All EMU articles in the treaty come into effect on ratification, except where later commencement is indicated in article 109e, page 25 of Cm 1934. Transitional provisions are set out in article 109e—109m, pages 25-30 of Cm 1934. Similarly, all protocols come into force on ratification, except that where their provisions relate to treaty articles which are subject to later commencement the provisions will not have effect until the later date. Thus, the protocol setting out the statute for the European Monetary Institute, pages 104-111 of Cm 1934, and the protocol on the excessive deficit procedure, page 111 of Cm 1934, will have effect on 1 January 1994. The protocol on the convergence criteria, page 112 of Cm 1934, will have effect when the Community takes decisions on the passage to the third stage of EMU as described in article 109j, pages 28-29 of Cm 1934, and the protocol on the statute for the European system of central banks and the European Central bank will have effect on the establishment of that institution, in accordance with article 109l, page 29-30 of Cm 1934.

European Union

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will tabulate those functions, decisions, or statutory authority and jurisdictions, currently performed by the Bank of England, Her Majesty's Treasury or any other Department of State that could be transferred to any of the institutions of the European Community that will exist in the event of ratification of the treaty on European union assuming the future adherence of the United Kingdom to these arrangements, showing for each function the name or part of the relevant institution to which it would be transferred, together with a reference to the relevant articles, protocols, chapters, sub-articles and page numbers as found in Cm. 1934.

Mr. Nelson: No functions or decisions that are currently the responsibility of the Bank of England, Her Majesty's Treasury or any other Department for which I am responsible will be transferred to any of the Community institutions envisaged in the treaty on European union, as a result of the ratification of that treaty. The treaty confers potential competence on the Community in respect of economic and monetary union. As a result, certain responsibilities would pass to the European Central bank, if the United Kingdom were to move to stage 3 of EMU. But such changes could not take place without the approval of Parliament as is required in clause 2 of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

Clearing Banks

Mr. Cabora: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union about the effects of a reduction in the number of clearing banks.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* My right hon. Friend received one letter from BIFU, dated 8 May.

Mr. Cabora: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received in the last year about the services provided by the clearing banks.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has received a large number of letters about the services provided by the clearing banks over the past year.

Public Borrowing

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish for the last 10 financial years the level of public debt that would accord with the definition of Government debt as defined in the Maastricht treaty protocol, showing where it differs from currently published measures of outstanding Government debt.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 13 May 1992]:* The reference level for Government debt in the protocol to the Maastricht treaty is defined in terms of general Government gross debt (GGGD) at nominal values, measured at 31 December and expressed as a percentage of GDP at market prices for that year. Figures for 31 December are not at present available. Current estimates for 31 March of each year are shown in the table. The outturn data and projections published in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" refer to net public sector debt (NPSD), and are expressed as a percentage of GDP in the year centred on end March. Compared to gross general Government debt, NPSD includes the debt of public corporations and subtracts the public sector's short-term liquid assets.

	GGGD (£bn)	*GGGD (percentage of GDP[1])*	*NPSD (percentage of GDP[2])*
end			
1981-82	142·2	55½	47½
1982-83	151·8	54	46½
1983-84	167·7	55½	46½
1984-85	183·8	56½	47
1985-86	193·6	54½	45½
1986-87	201·5	52½	42½
1987-88	211·5	49½	38½
1988-89	199·4	42½	32
1989-90	190·7	37½	28
1990-91	195·1	35½	27½

[1] financial year GDP
[2] GDP in four quarters centred on end-March
Source: Financial statistics table S1, February 1992 edition

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish for the last 10 financial years the level of public borrowing or repayment that would accord within the definition of budget balance as defined in the Maastricht treaty protocol; and if he will recast the 1992-93 and 1993-94 forecasts in the same manner, showing in each case how these differ from the same periods public sector borrowing requirement figures.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 13 May 1992]:* The reference level set in the protocol to the Maastricht treaty was in terms of the ratio of net Government borrowing to GDP. This definition corresponds most closely with the general Government financial deficit (GGFD) in the United Kingdom national accounts, GGFD figures are given in the table. The GGFD differs from the public sector borrowing requirement in that it is measured on an accruals basis whereas the PSBR is a cash concept. The GGFD also excludes borrowing by public corporations, and does not take account of privatisation proceeds and various other financial transactions.

	GGFD[1]		*PSBR*	*PSBR excluding privatisation proceeds*
	£ billion	*Per cent. of GDP*	*Per cent. of GDP*	*Per cent. of GDP*
1982-83	8·0	2·8	3·2	3·3
1983-84	11·9	3·9	3·2	3·6
1984-85	12·5	3·9	3·1	3·7
1985-86	8·8	2·5	1·6	2·3
1986-87	9·0	2·4	0·9	2·1
1987-88	2·7	0·6	−0·8	0·4
1988-89	−7·4	−1·6	−3·1	−1·6
1989-90	−0·9	−0·2	−1·5	−0·7
1990-91	2·4	0·5	−0·1	0·9
1991-92	18·2	3·1	2·4	3·7
1992-93	31·6	5·1	4·5	5·8
[2]1993-94	33	5	4¾	5½

[1] assuming public expenditure reserve wholly allocated to general Government in 1992-93 and 1993-94
[2] MTFS projections

Trade Balance

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each month since January 1990 the revisions to the balance of trade from which the average figure of £30 million per month, referred to in his answer of 18 November 1991, *Official Report*, columns *26-27*, was derived, giving the figures in each case.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* The provisional and revised figures for the visible trade balance are given together with the differences between the two. Irrespective of sign these differences average £30 million per month.

Visible trade balance (£ million)

	Provisional	*Revised[1]*	*Difference irrespective of sign*
1990			
January	−1,979	−2,020	41
February	−1,395	−1,394	1
March	−2,176	−2,086	90
April	−1,780	−1,804	24
May	−1,522	−1,528	6
June	−1,555	−1,562	7
July	−1,691	−1,680	11
August	−1,128	−1,199	71
September	−845	−813	32
October	−1,079	−1,064	15
November	−971	−980	9
December	−844	−855	11
1991			
January	−1,228	−1,283	55
February	−692	−727	35
March	−932	−836	96
April	−839	−837	2
May	−923	−922	1
June	−377	−377	0
July	−565	−606	41
August	−743	−796	53

[1] As published one month later.

DEFENCE

Standing Naval Force Mediterranean

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where the Royal Navy ship to be permanently allocated to the Standing Naval Force Mediterranean will be shore

based; for how long a ship will be so allocated; and what class of Royal Navy ships will be deployed as part of this formation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The details of the United Kingdom's contribution to STANAVFORMED are currently being finalised. This will be at least equal to our contribution to its predecessor, the Naval On Call Force Mediterranean.

Maersk Ascension

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what purpose, and at what cost, his Department has chartered the tanker Maersk Ascension.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The tanker Maersk Ascension is chartered to provide bulk fuel storage at Ascension Island in lieu of adequate on-shore facilities. The ship is chartered at a rate of £8,100 per day, with an additional £900 per month for crew overtime costs.

Deployments (Yugoslavia)

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the current and planned deployments of United Kingdom forces as part of the United Nations force in the former terrritory of Yugoslavia and the terms of their deployment; what United Kingdom *(a)* fixed wing, *(b)* helicopter and *(c)* naval assets have been or will be deployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 14 May at col. *174*. No fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters or naval assets are involved in this deployment. The United Nations protection force deployment is taking place under the terms of the UN Security Council Resolution 721 of 27 November 1991, the UN Secretary-General's report of 15 February 1992 (S/23592) and the establishing Security Council resolution 743 of 21 February 1992.

Gulf War

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has completed its analysis of the performance of United Kingdom forces and their equipment in the Gulf War.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The work is largely complete. Publication of our conclusions will need to reflect security considerations.

Royal Air Force

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the terms of reference of the study of the future logistics requirements of the RAF being undertaken by his Department; and what consultations will be held with civilian staff employed by the RAF.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of the reorganisation and reduction of MOD headquarters, a new RAF logistics command will be formed by amalgamating the staff of the air member for supply and organisation and the appropriate elements of the current RAF support command, which will be abolished. The headquarters of the new logistics command will be at the current support command headquarters at RAF Brampton. The studies under way concern the detailed structure and organisation of the logistics command, and the identification of the best long-term locations for those elements of the new command not already at Brampton. Other than at Brampton, the service and civilian staff most concerned are currently located in London, and at Harrogate, High Wycombe, RAF Stanbridge and RAF Swanton Morley. The MOD trade unions were informed of the study on 19 November 1991. Since the original notification various updates have been issued to staff and the trade unions. The recommendations of this study will be subject to the full consultative procedures agreed between the Department and the trade unions.

NATO Rapid Reaction Force

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircraft and of what types the United Kingdom is to contribute to the NATO rapid reaction air force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom plan to make Harrier, Jaguar and Tornado aircraft available to the NATO reaction force (air). The details of aircraft numbers have yet to be confirmed.

Franco-German Defence Corps

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards a Franco-German defence corps.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said last week, in a speech on European defence matters at Kings college, London, we believe that the Western European Union should have available to it a variety of forces and capabilities. The proposed Franco-German corps may be one of these.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: The European fighter aircraft development programme continues satisfactorily. Over 250 of the 285 equipments for EFA have now been selected. The aim is that the first prototype will fly later this year. In the meantime, industry is preparing revised quotations for the production investment and production phases of the programme against the background of a directive by the four partner Governments that costs must be reduced to the absolute minimum. Discussions with the other partner Governments are continuing. Decisions on whether to proceed to the next programme phases do not need to be taken until mid-1993.

Sea Skua and Sea Dart Missiles

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assessment his Department has made of the performance of the Sea Skua missile during the Gulf war; and what conclusions have been reached;

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the performance of the Sea Dart missile during the Gulf war; and what conclusions have been reached.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has conducted a thorough examination of all aspects of the Gulf operation, including an assessment of equipment performance.

The Sea Skua missile, carried by the Navy's Lynx helicopters, proved very effective, achieving a high success rate which included responsibility for around a quarter of Iraqi naval losses.

Our assessment of the lessons of the Falklands conflict resulted in improvements to the Sea Dart system. Sea Dart's capability was demonstrated during the Gulf conflict by its successful engagement and destruction of an Iraqi Silkworm missile in flight.

Trident

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been carried out to assess the possibility of the use of Trident as a sub-strategic nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Aitken: We are acquiring trident as a strategic system. Its capability for action on a more limited scale will, however, be taken into account in our consideration of possible options for replacement of the WE177 bomb.

Vanguard Submarines

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to place the order for a fourth Vanguard class submarine.

Mr. Aitken: We intend to place the order for a fourth Vanguard class submarine as soon as contract negotiations with Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. have been satisfactorily concluded.

Defence Review

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to institute a defence review.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government have undertaken a detailed analysis of the implications for British defence policy of recent changes in the international security environment, in full consultation with our NATO allies. From this we conclude that the United Kingdom's defence commitments can be met at lower levels of forces, and have developed plans accordingly. We will continue to keep these plans, and Britain's defence policy as a whole, under review.

Military Training

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is planning to change his policy regarding the release of information on the provision of military training by British service personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Anti-tank Missiles

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average number of anti-tank guided missile systems in each British Army of the Rhine infantry battalion in each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers and types of infantry battalions in BAOR since 1979 and their holdings of anti-tank guided missile systems are as follows:

Date and number and type of battalion	*Systems per battalion*
1979-84	
13 × Mechanised	16
2 × Type A infantry	16
1984-87	
11 × Mechanised	24
2 × Airmobile	42
1988-92	
13 × Mechanised/armoured	24

WE177 Bomb

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 13 May, *Official Report*, column 154, what estimates he has made of the total development costs for the possible vehicle of the replacement for the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Aitken: Several options are being considered for the vehicle for the WE177 replacement, and estimated development costs are different for each option. These estimates are derived from commercially confidential information provided by possible suppliers. Release at this stage could prejudice our future negotiating position with these potential suppliers.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *154*, how many American tactical air to surface missiles are being studied as possible replacements for the WE177 free fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Aitken: Two. These are the short-range attack missiles-tactical (SRAM-T) and the tactical integrated rocket ramjet missile (TIRRM—a derivative of the supersonic low-level air target, or SLAT).

Middle East

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *156*, what estimates he has made of the ability of Iraq, Libya and Iran to present a direct threat to the United Kingdom by the end of the decade.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is unlikely that Iraq, Libya and Iran will have the capability to pose a direct military threat to the United Kingdom by the year 2000. Increased proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems is, however, a growing concern for the security and stability of the Mediterranean and Gulf regions. The United Kingdom supports international efforts to constrain the spread of these weapons.

Defence Budget

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to change his policy regarding the release of information on the long-term costings of the defence budget.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. I have nothing to add to my answer of 13 May 1992 at col. *155*.

Helicopters

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many troop-carrying helicopters were permanently assigned to each helicopter-equipped RAF air transport squadron in each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information is not held in the form requested, and could be made available only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the transport capability of No. 72 Squadron, RAF, will be reduced as a result of the reorganisation of the RAF's support helicopter fleet.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Wessex helicopters operated by number 72 Squadron, RAF, based at RAF Aldergrove, are currently in the process of being reinforced by the larger Puma helicopters of 230 Squadron, which are redeploying from RAF Gutersloh. This is allowing us to reduce the numbers of older Wessex helicopters deployed in Northern Ireland, while providing a net increase in helicopter transport capability in the Province.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has concerning the number of troop-carrying helicopters permanently assigned to helicopter-equipped transport units in *(a)* the German armed forces, and *(b)* the United States armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The latest unclassified information that we have is that some 300 and 3,200 troop-carrying helicopters are actively employed by German and US armed forces respectively.

Project Costs

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *153*, if he will state the nature of the circumstances in which information on the estimated expenditure on individual projects would be treated as commercially confidential to protect the commercial position of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My Department takes such action when the release of the information concerned could be detrimental to its (and the taxpayer's) position in contractual negotiations.

Rosyth and Devonport Dockyards

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *153*, if he will place copies of the information he has provided to the management companies at Devonport and Rosyth royal dockyards in the Library.

Mr. Aitken: The information referred to in my earlier answer is commercially confidential.

AWACS Offset Agreement

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress Boeing has made towards fulfilling its obligations under the airborne warning and communication system offset agreement.

Mr. Aitken: The terms of the AWACS offset agreement, signed in 1987, required Boeing to offer competitive bidding opportunities to British defence companies leading to contracts being placed to a level of 130 per cent. of the purchase price of the RAF's Sentry airborne early warning aircraft. To date Boeing has submitted to my Department reports listing contracts placed totalling some $2·1 billion, of which we have agreed a total of some $1·57 billion to count for offset credit. The latter figure exceeds the 130 per cent. target and Boeing has therefore met its obligation. This target has been met well within the stipulated timescale and the offset programme has so far provided major contracts for some 250 companies throughout the United Kingdom.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 21 May 1992

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

UNCED

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what contribution on science and technology will be made by his Department to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June; what has been the cost of preparation for UNCED by his Department, and previously at the Department of Education and Science.

Mr. Waldegrave: Preparation for UNCED is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The Office of Science and Technology, the Department of Education and Science and the research councils have helped the Department of the Environment in these preparations, but the cost of this is not readily available.

Research Council

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Research Council on 29 April.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and I represented Her Majesty's Government at the meeting of the Council of Ministers (Research) in Luxembourg on 29 April 1992.

The Council adopted the two outstanding programmes under the third EC framework programme for research and development: measurement and testing, and the dissemination and exploitation of results. It also adopted the joint research centre's programme for 1992-94. The Council had a general discussion on the future shape of Community research and development, and invited the Commission to bring forward its proposals concerning the framework programme as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Shortages

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to mitigate the effects of water shortages both on consumers and on river and wetland environments.

Mr. Maclean: Primary responsibility for maintaining public water supplies rests with the water companies. The National Rivers Authority (NRA) also has a general statutory responsibility for conserving, redistributing and augmenting water resources and securing their proper use. This responsibility extends, in particular, to protecting river and wetland environment. My Department has for some months been holding regular meetings with the NRA, the Office of Water Services and the water companies to ensure necessary liaison and that we are aware of action (such as the consideration of applications for drought orders) that will be needed by the Department.

I am writing to all Members of Parliament in the areas which may be affected by water shortages this summer to explain the situation in greater detail.

Noise Abatement Zones

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to introduce changes in noise abatement zone procedures.

Mr. Maclean: Following the noise review recommendation that the procedures for establishing noise abatement zones should be reviewed, my Department commissioned the Building Research Establishment to carry out a survey of local authorities which have established noise abatement zones.

Thirty-seven local authorities which have established, or attempted to establish, noise abatement zones have been consulted during this work. An interim report from BRE is due shortly.

Isle of Dogs

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the number of jobs which have been sited in the enterprise zone in the Isle of Dogs from its inception to the latest convenient date, together with the total transferred there from existing locations outside that zone, the numbers of jobs related to completely new enterprises founded in that zone and the approximate expenditure of public funds, including remissions, for each of the latter categories of job so created.

Mr. Squire: By December 1989 there were 9,600 jobs in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone, an increase of 8,959 since the designation of the zone. It is not possible to state how many jobs have been transferred from outside the zone, nor how many relate to new enterprises in the zone. Consequently, public expenditure on jobs in either category cannot be estimated.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department will have any responsibility to promote *(a)* combined heat and power stations, *(b)* the use of combustible waste as fuel and *(c)* industrial energy efficiency programmes following the abolition of the Department of Energy.

Mr. Maclean: The Department is now responsible for the work of the Energy Efficiency Office.

Energy Efficiency Office programmes relevant to industry are: the best practice programme covering research, development, demonstration and dissemination of energy technologies in the industrial, commercial and buildings sectors, including the promotion of all types of combined heat and power plant; the energy management assistance scheme (EMAS) for organisations with fewer than 500 employees; and the "Making a Corporate Commitment" campaign which is aimed at chairman and directors in industry, commerce and public sector organisations.

Primary responsibility for the use of combustible waste as fuel now rests with the Department of Trade and Industry.

Office Rents

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will institute a survey of the difference in the office rental levels available for government leasing between *(a)* routine property company transactions and *(b)* receivers or administrators thereof.

Mr. Baldry: No. It is already established practice within Government to negotiate the best available terms, including rental levels, for any new office lease requirement, regardless of who might be the landlord.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to improve protection for sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Maclean: The additional safeguards for sites of special scientific interest announced by this Government in September 1991 came into effect on 2 January 1992. Further details of the many steps we have taken to conserve our natural heritage, and how our policies on conservation are to be reflected in land use planning, are set out in a draft planning policy guidance note, which was issued for public consultation on 27 February. The response to that consultation exercise are now being considered.

Air Pollution

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives he has to reduce the impact of air pollution on health and amenity.

Mr. Maclean: These are conveniently summarised on pages 42 to 44 of the White Paper, "This Common Inheritance—the First Year Report", published in September 1991. Twenty-three separate commitments to further action are listed.

Local Government Boundaries

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the Local Government Boundary Commission's proposal to transfer Thamesmead East ward from the London borough of Bexley to the London borough of Greenwich; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Squire: Ninety-one representations from Members, local groups, members of the public and other interested persons have been received. We are considering all the points made and will make public our decision as soon as possible.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities which came within 1 per cent. of the expenditure criteria he laid down for charge capping for 1992-93.

Mr. Squire: There are 126 authorities—94 charging and 32 precepting authorities—which have set budgets for 1992-93 within 1 per cent. of the limit implied by the principles which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has adopted for community charge limitation for 1992-93. These are as follows:

Precepting authorities
- Avon
- Bedfordshire
- Berkshire
- Buckinghamshire
- Cambridgeshire
- Cheshire
- Cleveland
- Cornwall
- Cumbria
- Derbyshire
- Devon
- Dorset
- Durham
- East Sussex
- Hereford and Worcester
- Hertfordshire
- Humberside
- Isle of Wight
- Lancashire
- Leicestershire
- Lincolnshire
- Norfolk
- Northamptonshire
- Northumberland
- Nottinghamshire
- Oxfordshire
- Shropshire
- Somerset
- Staffordshire
- Suffolk
- Surrey
- Wiltshire

Charging authorities
- Adur
- Barking and Dagenham
- Barnet
- Barnsley
- Barrow-in-Furness
- Birmingham
- Blackburn
- Bolton
- Bradford
- Brighton
- Bristol
- Burnley
- Bury
- Calderdale
- Cambridge
- Camden
- Coventry
- Crawley
- Darlington
- Derwentside
- Doncaster
- Dudley
- Eastbourne
- Enfield
- Gateshead
- Gloucester
- Hackney
- Hammersmith and Fulham
- Haringey
- Harlow
- Harrow
- Hartlepool
- Hastings
- Havering
- Hillingdon
- Hounslow
- Hyndburn
- Ipswich
- Islington
- Kingston upon Hull
- Kingston upon Thames
- Kirklees
- Knowsley
- Leeds
- Leicester
- Lewisham

Liverpool
Manchester
Merton
Milton Keynes
Newcastle upon Tyne
Newham
North Tyneside
Norwich
Nottingham
Oxford
Pendle
Plymouth
Preston
Reading
Richmond upon Thames
Rochdale
Rossendale
Rotherham
Salford
Sandwell
Sefton
Sheffield
Shepway
Solihull
South Tyneside
Southampton
Southwark
St. Helens
Stevenage
Stockport
Sunderland
Sutton
Tameside
Thurrock
Tower Hamlets
Wakefield
Walsall
Waltham Forest
Wansbeck
Watford
Wear Valley
Welwyn Hatfield
West Wiltshire
Wigan
Wirral
Wolverhampton
York

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to make a statement before the summer recess on the outline 1993-94 financial settlement for local authorities.

Mr. Redwood: Although it has been the custom to announce in July each year the Government's proposals for total standard spending and aggregate external finance, there are exceptional circumstances this year in relation to the revenue support grant settlement for 1993-94. First, in fixing these aggregates we shall want to take into account the implications for the level of council tax and for the transitional arrangements. These will in part turn on the results of the valuation of properties, which will not be available until September. Secondly, we shall want to look closely at the financing of community care. We have therefore decided to postpone an announcement of total standard spending and aggregate external finance until the autumn when our detailed proposals for the revenue support grant settlement will also be announced. I believe that it is to the advantage of local government that we should postpone these decisions this year. Similar considerations apply in Scotland and Wales and my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Wales will also be postponing decisions on the aggregates of the settlements for Scotland and Wales until the autumn.

Rain Forests

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to prohibit the import of illegally extracted timber from tropical rain forests.

Mr. Maclean: The Government believe that restrictions or bans on tropical timber imports would be counter-productive. We are pursuing an effective policy of helping developing countries to put their forest management onto a sustainable basis.

Private Sector Forum for London

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the timing and agenda for the first meeting of the private sector forum for London; and whether the forum will have its own staff and budget;

(2) if he will make a statement indicating which organisations and individuals have been invited to become members of the private sector forum for London; and what position has been given in this process to nominations from London representative organisations and to local authority representatives.

Sir George Young: We are still considering the detailed arrangements for the new private sector forum for London. We will announce our conclusions in due course.

Housing Investment

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to develop further the new approach introduced last year to the allocation of resources within the local authority housing investment programme process.

Sir George Young: I intend to carry forward the new arrangements made last year with two significant new points of development. First, I propose to extend the emphasis on ensuring that the processes for allocating capital funds to local authorities are focused on the vital issue of improving the performance of authorities and getting best value from the money that is available for social housing. Secondly, in association with this and consistent with the need for a strategic approach, I intend to draw together, at a local level, both the housing investment programme (HIP) process, which applies to local authorities, and the approved development programme (ADP) process, which is used for the allocation of funds through the Housing Corporation to housing associations.

A consultation paper has today been sent to the relevant local authority associations and their members; to the National Federation of Housing Associations and the major developing associations; and to the Institute of Housing, seeking views and comments on these and other proposals to develop the local authority HIP round. The proposals involve the preparation by local authorities of comprehensive housing strategies and the way in which resources will be allocated by central Government.

The Government's overall objective is to secure the best value for money from the considerable volume of resources allocated to local authorities within the HIP process. All the proposals which we have put forward will support this aim by encouraging local authorities to be

efficient and effective in their roles as landlords and enablers of social housing and in promoting better co-ordination and closer partnership at local level between authorities, housing associations and the private sector.

Last year, housing Ministers attended a number of successful presentations from local authorities, based on their housing strategies and HIP proposals. These occasions heightened the awareness and involvement of tenants and other local people in the HIP round, and pointed to the scope for partnership between local authorities, the private sector, and the Housing Corporation and housing associations in the provision of social housing. We propose to continue this initiative during the coming year, by inviting some authorities to give presentations in the course of Ministers' regular round of visits, and others to give more structured presentations in the course of the HIP round.

A copy of the consultation paper has been placed in the Libraries of the House. Views and comments are invited by 26 June. I intend to report back to the House shortly thereafter.

Waste

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, when the process guidance notes for the waste disposal and recycling sector processes prescribed under part 1 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 will be available.

Mr. Maclean: I am pleased to report that chief inspector's guidance to inspectors are expected to be published on 27 May for 11 processes in the waste disposal and recycling sector. These notes have been drawn up following completion or research reviews; and relevant industries and other bodies have been given the opportunity to put forward their comments. The notes will provide a sound framework within which inspectors can assess applications for the authorisation of new processes and existing processes. They represent a further stage in the introduction of integrated pollution control.

A set of the notes will be placed in the Library as soon as they are published.

The preparation of guidance notes for the remaining processes to come under control is well advanced. Further notes will be published in the next few months.

Water Industry (Competition)

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has taken the necessary steps to make public the responses to consultation on the measures to promote competition in the water industry which are now incorporated in the Competition and Service (Utilities) Act 1992.

Mr. Maclean: Copies of 45 responses to the consultation paper, "Proposed legislation on competition in the water industry", issued jointly by the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office in October 1991, are available to the public in the Department of the Environment's Library until 30 September 1992. A list of the bodies which submitted these responses has been placed in the Library of the House. In a further four cases, the body submitting a response asked that it be treated as confidential and that has been respected.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future programme of large-scale voluntary transfers of local authority housing stock to housing associations.

Sir George Young: The Government are committed to a continuing programme of large-scale voluntary transfers. I will issue a consultation paper shortly setting out my proposals for the implementation of the manifesto commitment to limit the number of properties transferred in a single batch and on other possible changes to the arrangements for transfers. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will also be issuing a consultation paper.

It makes sense for future applications for consent for large-scale transfers under sections 32 to 43 of the Housing Act 1985 to be considered on the basis of the new arrangements arising out of the consultation exercise. However, I am aware that a small number of authorities have already issued a formal consultation notice to the tenants in accordance with the procedure set out in schedule 3A to the Housing Act 1985 or are on the point of issuing such a notice and have already incurred significant expenditure in preparing for transfer. These authorities are: East Cambridgeshire, Surrey Heath, Breckland, Woodspring and West Dorset district councils and the London boroughs of Hillingdon and Kingston upon Thames. I will be prepared to consider applications for large-scale transfers by these authorities under the existing guidelines, once they have completed consulting their tenants.

Asbestos Pollution, Armley

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will make available grants to assist home owners in the Armley area of Leeds to remove from their homes the asbestos pollution from the former Roberts factory.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 20 May 1992]:* Under part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, local authorities are able to give mandatory renovation grants for works to make a property fit for human habitation. This may cover asbestos removal where the presence of asbestos causes a dwelling to fail the fitness standard, for example, as a result of serious disrepair, structural instability or poor ventilation. In other circumstances, authorities may offer discretionary grants for asbestos removal where works are required to put a dwelling into reasonable repair, or in conjunction with other works.

Somerset House

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what plans he has for the future of Somerset house.

Sir George Young: None at present, I am considering how best to take forward the challenge issued last December by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for an imaginative alternative use for Somerset house.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Serious Fraud Office

Sir Donald Thompson: To ask the Attorney-General when he expects to lay before Parliament and publish the annual report of the Serious Fraud Office for the year 1991-92.

The Attorney-General: The report was laid before Parliament at 11 o'clock this morning. I have caused a copy of the report to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many countries the Serious Fraud Office has visited in connection with the BCCI inquiry.

The Attorney-General: It is the practice of the director of the Serious Fraud Office not to divulge operational details relating to criminal investigations by the Serious Fraud Office.

TRANSPORT

A1

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the purpose of the works which have caused traffic lights and one-way operations to be set up on the A1 Haggerston, south of Berwick upon Tweed; for how long the obstructions will remain; and whether they will remain in place during weekends and English and Scottish holidays.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The traffic signals on the A1 at Haggerston south of Berwick have been introduced so that essential maintenance and improvement works to the carriageway can be undertaken. The work is programmed for completion at the beginning of August.

The traffic signals will normally remain in place at weekends, but arrangements have been made for them to be removed on Thursday 21 May for the bank holiday weekend.

Jubilee Line Extension

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for Government funding of the extension of the Jubilee line through to London docklands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 18 May.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what parameters have been given to British Rail for the definition of the route of the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. MacGregor: We attach importance to encouraging the transfer of freight from road to rail, so we have provisionally asked British Rail to allow for the new line to take freight as well as passenger services if demand warrants it.

The additional cost of extra dedicated tracks along the route for freight would be substantial and would not be justified by the anticipated demand, even on optimistic forecasts.

So we have also asked British Rail to define a route which will allow the construction of a two-track railway with a freight capability, built to continental loading gauge standards. BR would consider the potential for the addition of passing loops and other facilities.

We will confirm our view on these points after consulting the relevant local authorities and others who have an interest.

Air Fares (Northern Ireland)

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairmen of British Airways and British Midland to discuss a reduction in fares between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: No, although meetings with United Kingdom airlines are held periodically in the course of departmental business.

The evidence suggests that there is, on a fare per mile basis, quite a wide variation in fares amongst the various routes to Northern Ireland. But taken as a whole the Northern Ireland fares do not differ markedly from those on routes between regional airports in other parts of the United Kingdom.

All United Kingdom fare tariffs, including those to Northern Ireland, are filed with the Civil Aviation Authority, which has the powers to act against fares which are clearly excessive. The level they are filed at is a matter for the commercial judgment of the airline concerned.

British Rail Investment

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list British Rail's completed infrastructure investment capital and revenue, in Scotland for the financial years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and projected similar investment for each financial year until 1994-95.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail keeps only limited historic information on investment on a geographical basis, and as BR plans on a business sector basis there is no information for future years.

London, Tilbury and Southend Line

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the resignalling projects on the London Tilbury and Southend line will be completed and operational.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that the new signalling is expected to be operational in 1995.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail about the reliability of trains on the Fenchurch Street, Tilbury and Southend loop line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has told me that the current £50 million resignalling programme is the key to improving reliability on this line.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safeguards exist to ensure that British Rail remains able to improve rolling stock, signalling and upgrading of station facilities on the Fenchurch Street, Tilbury, Southend line pending the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill receiving Royal Assent.

Mr. Freeman: It is for British Rail to set priorities for expenditure within the funds available to it. For our part, we are doing all that we can to help it maintain its investment programme. In June 1991 an extra £400 million was provided to help British Rail maintain services and continue its investment programmes despite falling revenue. The Autumn Statement announced the addition of £1 billion to British Rail's plans for 1992.

I am pleased that British Rail has been able to begin the resignalling project on the London, Tilbury and Southend line.

M4

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about extended delays to those travelling westbound on the M4 towards London Heathrow as a result of the coning-off of lanes on the motorway on Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 May.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: One hon. Member telephoned my right hon. Friend's office and another telephoned the Department. No other representations have been received.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the reduction of the westbound carriageway of the M4 at the Heston service station from three lanes to one lane on Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 May; how many people were working on the M4 at Heston; and what repairs were being carried out.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Extended delays occurred on the westbound carriageway of M4 in outer London last weekend following a local failure of the concrete carriageway on Friday 15 May. Traffic was immediately restricted to one lane to protect motorists and a 20 mph speed restriction was imposed. The centre lane was reopened temporarily for the Friday evening peak period, following emergency repairs, but was then closed again for more substantial remedial measures.

Concrete was broken out for 8 metres either side of a damaged lateral joint and was replaced by asphaltic material. The M4 westbound carriageway was fully reopened to traffic by 5.30 am on Monday 18 May. The Department's agent and contractor are to be congratulated on the speed and efficiency with which they tackled this emergency, which could not have been anticipated. The number of people working on site varied throughout the weekend depending on the operations being undertaken. At the peak, 22 engineering, supervisory and operative staff were employed. Most work was complete by midday on Sunday but time was needed for the asphalt to cool and harden before traffic could be allowed to run on it.

Commuter Trains, Kent

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his decision on British Rail's request for permission to enter into a leasing arrangement in order to fund a new fleet of commuter trains for north Kent.

Mr. Freeman: An order for the 188 Networkers necessary to complete the replacement of rolling stock for Kent link services was placed by British Rail on 10 April 1992. There is therefore no need for a leasing arrangement to fund new trains for Kent link routes.

British Rail (Policing)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for the provision and costing of policing of British Rail stations, lines and services following franchising.

Mr. Freeman: The appropriate future arrangements for policing the railways are under consideration as part of the development of our proposals for privatisation. Our proposals will be set out in more detail in a White Paper which we aim to publish later in the summer and brought forward in legislation to be introduced later this Session.

Earth Summit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what specific contributions his Department made to Her Majesty's Government's submissions to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June; and what was the cost to his Department in preparing the submissions.

Mr. MacGregor: The conference will take a wide-ranging view of a variety of complex and interlinked environment and development issues. Transport has an important role to play in issues such as climate change, the protection of the atmosphere and the promotion of sustainable human settlements.

My Department has played a full part in developing the Government's policy on these issues. It is not practicable to separate out the cost of carrying out this work.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Car Service Volunteers

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated annual revenue to the Exchequer from the taxation of mileage allowance paid to car service volunteers with the national health service.

Mr. Dorrell: Volunteers who drive for the hospital car service are taxed on motor mileage allowances only to the extent that they exceed the actual costs incurred in driving for the national health service. I regret that information is not available about the tax collected as a result of taxing this profit element.

European Community Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what matters in regard to financing environmental protection and restoration were discussed at the ECOFIN Council in Brussels on 19 May.

Sir John Cope: The only environmental issue raised at ECOFIN on 19 May was a brief announcement by the Commission that a draft directive proposing a carbon-energy tax would be published soon. There was no discussion.

Alcohol Taxation

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the recommendations of Her Majesty's Government to their European Community counterparts on tax harmonisation for alcohol, with particular reference to the export market for Scotch whisky; and if he will make a statement on current negotiations and the likely date for the reaching of a final conclusion.

Sir John Cope: In the 1992 Budget Statement my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer indicated that he was not prepared to accept any deal in Brussels that would force other member states to put up duties on spirits. At the 19 May 1992 ECOFIN the United Kingdom objected to the currently proposed 1,000 ecu minimum rate for spirits. No conclusion was reached, and the subject will be discussed again as part of wider discussions on indirect taxation in ECOFIN in June.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to implement a capping mechanism whereby current differentials in European Community member states on tax levied on different alcoholic beverages will, as a minimum, be retained, or as a maximum be harmonised; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: A capping mechanism would constrain the ability of member states, including the United Kingdom, to determine their own fiscal policies. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer met representatives of the spirits industry on 15 May 1992 to discuss the EC proposals. He advised them that, for this reason, he was not prepared to argue for capping. However, he assured them that he would not agree to any minimum rate which forced other member states to increase their rate of duty on spirits to the detriment of United Kingdom exports.

Earth Summit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what particular contributions his Department made to Her Majesty's Government's submissions to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June; and what was the cost to his Department in preparing the contributions.

Sir John Cope: Submissions made to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development reflect the policies of Her Majesty's Government. A number of departments, including the Treasury, are involved in the preparations for the summit in Rio de Janeiro. The cost of the Treasury's contribution has not been separately assessed.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the public sector borrowing requirement for each financial year since 1974-75 expressed in actual pounds, constant pounds and as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 19 May 1992]:* The table shows the figures:

	PSBR	*PSBR as per cent. of GDP*	*Real PSBR[1] at 1985 prices*
1974-75	8,001	9·1	26,723
1975-76	10,251	9·4	27,275
1976-77	8,263	6·5	19,365
1977-78	5,381	3·6	11,093
1978-79	9,174	5·4	17,056
1979-80	9,926	4·8	15,816
1980-81	12,519	5·4	16,857
1981-82	8,631	3·4	10,599
1982-83	8,904	3,2	10,207
1983-84	9,678	3·2	10,603
1984-85	10,134	3·1	10,573
1985-86	5,622	1·6	5,559
1986-87	3,559	0·9	3,407
1987-88	−3,406	−0·8	−3,092
1988-89	−14,657	−3·1	−12,411
1989-90	−7,932	−1·5	−6,302
1990-91	−468	−0·1	−344
1991-92	13,898	—[2]	—[2]

[1] Real PSBR is current price estimate divided by the GDP deflator.
[2] GDP and GDP deflator are not yet available for 1991-92.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with east European leaders regarding potential dangers of aging nuclear power stations in eastern Europe; and what funds will be available to promote safety at these plants.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following discussions between the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister last December, assistance has been allocated from the know-how fund for nuclear safety projects in Czechoslovakia. Similar assistance has been allocated to Bulgaria. On funding, the EC has to date allocated 18·5 mecu from its PHARE programme to Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia for technical assistance to improve nuclear safety, and further funds will be allocated to eastern European countries from the 1992 PHARE budget.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Visas

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the entry clearance officer, Islamabad, will issue the entry clearance visa to Zafar Iqbal of Pakistan, fiancé of Miss Nasreen Akthar Younis of Blackburn, following the refusal of the immigration appeal tribunal on 5 February to grant leave to the entry clearance officer to appeal against the adjudicator's determination to issue the visa; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay in issuing the visa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any details about this case, I have asked our high commissioner at Islamabad for a full report. I shall send the hon. Member a substantive reply as soon as possible.

Arms Control

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policies to control the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and conventional weapons will be put forward by the United Kingdom at the Foreign Ministers' meeting on the future co-ordination of policies towards the Commonwealth of Independent States in Lisbon on 22-23 May.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We will continue to press all non-parties in the CIS to accede to the non-proliferation treaty and to pursue responsible policies on the transfer of conventional weapons. We have already made clear the importance we attach to signature of the 1925 Geneva protocol on the use of chemical weapons, and adherence to Australia group guidelines on the export of chemical precursors. We look forward to the conclusion at the Lisbon conference of an agreement to establish an international science and technology centre in Russia to fund and co-ordinate the peaceful employment of former Soviet military scientists.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on progress made in the multilateral negotiations on curbing arms proliferation in the middle east.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the written reply that I gave to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) on 18 May at column *11*.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of the freezing of the assets of Serbia and Montenegro; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Her Majesty's Government will take a position on individual measures in the light of the situation on the ground and in the context of discussions in the EC and in the United Nations. The EC continues to withhold from Serbia the trade and aid benefits extended to the other five republics of the former Yugoslavia. The Council has asked the Commission to report on the other possible economic sanctions.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's current policy towards *(a)* Croatia, *(b)* Serbia and *(c)* Montenegro in respect of the imposition of economic sanctions.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Her Majesty's Government will take a position on individual measures in the light of the situation on the ground and in the context of discussions in the EC and in the United Nations. The EC continues to withhold from Serbia the trade and aid benefits extended to the other five republics of the former Yugoslavia. The Council has asked the Commission to report on other possible economic sanctions.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with representatives of the Government of Bosnia-Herzgeovina; what subjects were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met the Bosnian Foreign Minister on 7 May to discuss recent events in Bosnia.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the ambassador of Yugoslavia; and what subjects were discussed on that occasion.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I met the Yugoslav ambassador on 30 April to discuss recent developments in Yugoslavia.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the representatives of the Croatian Government in London; and what subjects were discussed on that occasion.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government of Croatia have no diplomatic or consular representative in London. However, the head of the Croatian information office is in regular touch with officials.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in respect of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We remain in close touch with the United Nations Secretary-General through our mission to New York. We welcome the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 752 on 15 May and call upon all parties and others concerned in the fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina to comply with it.

Maastricht

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what dates the treaty on European union signed at Maastricht on 7 February and laid before Parliament on 6 May, *(a)* comes into effect or *(b)* is ratified as respects *(a)* the Preamble, *(b)* Title I (Common Provisions), *(c)* Title V (Provisions on a Common Foreign and Security Policy), *(d)* Title VI (Provisions on Co-operation in the field of Justice and Foreign Affairs), and *(e)* Title VII (Final Provisions); whether the Ponsonby rule applies to (i) the whole of that treaty, (ii) certain provisions of that treaty and in the case of (ii) if he will specify which provisions.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave on 14 May to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). The treaty on European union can be ratified only in its entirety; there is no procedure for ratifying different parts. Provided that Parliament has passed the necessary legislation in respect of the titles amending the Community treaties, an instrument of ratification will be deposited with the Italian Government in accordance with article R of the treaty.

Since it is a treaty signed subject to ratification, the Ponsonby rule will apply to the union treaty as a whole. The rule requires that such a treaty should not be ratified until 21 days after it has been laid before the House following signature. This requirement will have been more than fulfilled.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid and Advice

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department if he will state for each year between 1979-80 and 1990-91 the contributions in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* at 1990-91 prices of those receiving (i) civil legal aid, (ii) criminal legal aid and (iii) legal advice and assistance.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The figures requested are in the table. They show contributions retained in each financial year. The cash prices have been uprated to 1991 prices using the GDP deflator.

Contributions for civil and criminal legal aid and legal advice and assistance in cash and 1990-91 figures for the years 1979 to 1991

£ million

Year	Civil		Criminal		Advice and assistance	
	Cash	1990-91	Cash	1990-91	Cash	1990-91
1979-80	4·6	9·9	1·5	3·3	0·5	1·0
1980-81	5·4	9·9	1·9	3·5	0·6	1·1
1981-82	5·7	9·6	2·0	3·3	0·9	1·5
1982-83	6·4	10·0	1·8	2·9	1·1	1·7
1983-84	7·1	10·6	1·9	2·9	1·3	2·0
1984-85	7·5	10·7	1·8	2·5	1·7	2·4
1985-86	8·2	11·1	1·7	2·3	2·0	2·7
1986-87	8·8	11·5	2·0	2·6	2·1	2·7
1987-88	11·2	13·8	2·7	3·4	2·5	3·0
1988-89	12·0	13·8	3·3	3·8	2·5	2·9
1989-90	13·3	14·4	4·4	4·8	2·8	3·1
1990-91	13·8	—	4·9	—	3·1	—

Community Charge

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department if he will state the number of summonses issued and number of liability orders obtained for non-payment, or arrears, of community charge for the year 1991-92 for each local authority in England and Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have arranged for this information to be made available in the Library of the House.

Legal Aid

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current expenditure on legal aid; and what it was 10 years ago.

Mr. John M. Taylor: After the recovery of contributions, the estimated outturn of expenditure on legal aid in 1991-92 is £969 million, inclusive of administration costs. Expenditure in 1981-82 was £170 million net.

Social Security Commissioners

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department what steps the Lord Chancellor takes to ensure geographical representation for the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom in the appointment of social security commissioners.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Most cases are determined on paper but commissioners sit regularly in all four regions of the United Kingdom when a particular case requires them to do so.

To ensure that only the best candidates are appointed, ability and experience, rather than regional origin, are the criteria for appointment as a social security commissioner.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Kwazulu Police Commissioner

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the visit to Britain of the Kwazulu police commissioner, General Jack Buchner.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand that General Jack Buchner came to Great Britain in a private capacity in May and arranged a visit to Humberside police, which was subsequently cancelled. Her Majesty's Government were not aware of these arrangements.

South African Police

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue advice to police forces that they should not receive delegations from the South African police without consulting his Department and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The majority of visits to United Kingdom police forces by overseas police personnel are arranged on a Government-to-Government basis. Where this is not the case, chief officers of police are regularly reminded of the need to consult my Department and/or the Foreign and Commonwealth Office if there are likely to be political or other sensitivities.

Immigration Rules

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will propose changes to the immigration rules to accommodate the free movement provisions of the European Economic Community/ European Free Trade Association treaty.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I envisage doing so during the second half of this year. Subject to satisfactory progress towards ratification by the parties concerned, the target date for the European economic area agreement to come into force is 1 January 1993.

Wolds Private Remand Prison

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what level of payment per annum the Government are giving to Group 4 for the running of the Wolds private remand prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details of the payments to Group 4 are subject to commercial confidentiality and cannot therefore be made public.

Miscarriage of Justice Tribunal

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking in the creation of a miscarriage of justice tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Present arrangements for the consideration and investigation of alleged miscarriages of justice are being reviewed as part of the work being carried out by the Royal Commission on criminal justice. The Government will give careful consideration to the findings of the Royal Commission on all matters arising from its examination of the criminal justice system.

Firearms

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of firearms and shotguns reported stolen in the years 1986 to 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information relates to the number of notifiable offences of burglary and theft recorded by the police in which firearms, including shotguns, were reported to have been stolen. More than one weapon may have been stolen during each offence. The figures for 1986 to 1989 are contained in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1989" which is in the Library. The total figure for 1990 is 2,024. Figures for 1991 are not yet available.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has of the number of illegally held firearms and shotguns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of persons found guilty of possessing firearms or shotguns without the necessary certificate are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", copies of which are in the Library. In 1990, the latest year for which figures are available, 441 persons were convicted of possessing shotguns without a certificate and 383 of possessing other firearms or ammunition without a certificate.

These figures do not show the whole picture. Although only 0·2 per cent. of notifiable offences recorded in 1990 involved a firearm combating armed crime remains a top priority. My Department has commissioned a research project by Oxford university into the source of firearms used in crime. I shall consider the results carefully to see whether further measures could be taken to reduce armed crime.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many firearms and shotgun certificates were issued in each year between 1986 and 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of applications for new firearm and shotgun certificates granted and the number of certificates renewed are shown for each year between 1986 and 1990 in tables 1 and 3 of Home Office statistical bulletin number 23/91. A copy of this bulletin is in the Library. Figures for 1991 are not yet available.

Asylum

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of applications for asylum in the United Kingdom in each month in 1991 and 1992 to the nearest available date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is given in the table:

Applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, by nationality, January to December 1991 and January to April 1992

Number of principal applicants

	1991						
Nationality	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*
Europe and Americas							
Bulgaria	15	45	40	40	55	45	30
Colombia	20	15	15	10	15	—	5
Romania	25	65	80	50	35	25	40
Turkey	370	205	180	205	145	160	205
USSR	10	35	10	25	25	10	10
Others	+	5	15	15	10	25	10
Total	440	370	340	350	285	260	295
Africa							
Angola	420	370	600	940	530	440	520
Congo	30	15	30	40	—	20	20
Ethiopia	245	150	130	195	195	120	165
Ghana	195	225	245	330	370	230	230
Nigeria	20	25	25	30	30	25	30
Somalia	240	190	170	260	190	180	160
Sudan	70	40	35	40	40	35	135
Togo/Ivory Coast	65	50	80	200	175	50	190
Uganda	305	225	275	200	80	25	55
Zaire	435	375	615	1,150	550	520	625
Others	—	—	130	330	240	155	330

Nationality	1991 January	February	March	April	May	June	July
Total	2,020	1,665	2,330	3,715	2,395	1,805	2,460
Middle East							
Iran	65	55	35	65	35	35	35
Iraq	125	75	110	70	55	25	45
Lebanon	295	145	65	40	25	15	15
Others	—	—	25	45	30	20	40
Total	485	275	235	225	145	95	135
Asia							
China	20	50	45	60	55	40	55
India	260	185	160	165	170	175	165
Pakistan	400	255	305	320	305	290	245
Sri Lanka	600	450	385	355	360	275	255
Others	—	—	85	85	90	55	115
Total	1,275	940	980	990	975	835	830
Other nationalities[2]	240	195	—	—	—	—	—
Grand Total	4,455	3,445	3,885	5,275	3,805	3,000	3,725

Nationality	1991 August	September	October	November	December	1991 total	1992 January	February	March	April
Europe and Americas										
Bulgaria	20	30	15	20	15	375	25	10	5	10
Colombia	10	20	5	15	15	140	30	10	10	10
Romania	65	60	30	45	35	555	35	45	40	25
Turkey	155	145	125	125	95	2,110	205	120	170	135
USSR	20	25	25	20	25	245	20	15	20	15
Others	25	50	70	110	110	450	130	130	110	130
Total	295	335	275	335	300	3,875	440	325	355	325
Africa										
Angola	360	360	600	465	170	5,780	40	15	20	15
Congo	25	70	50	65	15	370	10	+	+	—
Ethiopia	110	150	115	65	45	1,685	65	40	30	50
Ghana	145	145	115	105	70	2,405	140	110	140	130
Nigeria	40	25	35	25	20	335	30	25	25	35
Somalia	140	145	135	110	80	1,995	125	95	110	105
Sudan	160	155	175	150	120	1,150	100	75	65	40
Togo/Ivory Coast	185	185	360	315	45	1,910	35	15	15	20
Uganda	15	55	65	50	90	1,440	15	15	+	20
Zaire	420	555	725	625	410	7,010	105	95	80	75
Others	305	470	710	600	135	3,405	70	40	60	35
Total	1,900	2,320	3,090	2,580	1,205	27,490	730	530	550	520
Middle East										
Iran	35	50	35	50	35	530	50	20	5	25
Iraq	75	55	70	110	85	915	125	60	80	45
Lebanon	35	20	35	30	35	755	35	20	15	35
Others	30	35	50	35	30	340	40	35	40	30
Total	175	170	190	225	180	2,540	250	140	140	140
Asia										
China	25	50	50	35	45	525	35	40	30	25
India	155	160	190	135	165	2,045	245	115	155	115
Pakistan	240	235	290	210	150	3,195	160	140	175	140
Sri Lanka	285	205	225	235	135	3,750	255	110	160	150
Others	265	50	65	40	35	890	55	25	35	25
Total	970	700	815	655	530	10,405	745	435	550	455
Other nationalities[2]	—	—	—	—	—	435	—	—	—	—
Grand Total	3,340	3,525	4,375	3,790	2,210	44,840	2,165	1,420	1,595	1,440

[1] Figures rounded to nearest 5 with + = 1 or 2.
[2] Includes applications in January and February 1991 from nationalities not specifically identified above. From March 1991 these are included in the "other" category for the relevant geographical area.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of

applications for asylum in the United Kingdom in the years 1989 to 1991, showing applications by country of origin.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is given in the table:

Applications[1] received in the United Kingdom for asylum, excluding dependants, by nationality, 1989 to 1991

Number of principal applicants

Nationality	*1989[1,2]*	*1990[1,2]*	*1991*
Europe			
Bulgaria	30	135	375
Romania	20	300	555
Turkey	2,415	1,185	2,110
USSR	30	100	245
Other Europe	135	65	360
Total	2,630	1,780	3,645
Americas			
Colombia	90	170	140
Other	45	75	90
Total	135	245	230
Africa			
Angola	235	1,160	5,780
Congo	20	70	370
Ethiopia	560	1,975	1,685
Ghana	330	1,020	2,405
Nigeria	20	115	335
Somalia	1,850	1,920	1,995
Sudan	110	255	1,150
Togo/Ivory Coast	20	110	1,910
Uganda	1,235	1,905	1,450
Zaire	525	1,730	7,010
Others	205	560	3,405
Total	5,095	10,820	27,500
Middle East			
Iran	350	365	530
Iraq	215	890	915
Lebanon	180	1,020	755
Others	35	80	340
Total	780	2,355	2,540
Asia			
China	85	240	525
India	630	1,430	2,075
Pakistan	250	1,315	3,245
Sri Lanka	1,790	3,215	3,765
Others	130	285	890
Total	2,885	6,490	10,495
Other nationalities and nationality not recorded	110	315	435
Grand Total	11,640	22,000	44,840

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 5.
[2] Figures are provisional. 1990 figures may understate because of delays in recording.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were granted *(a)* asylum and *(b)* indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom in each year from 1981 to 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information is given in the table for those granted asylum. Information on the number of persons granted indefinite leave to remain in the United Kindom, that is, the total accepted for settlement under the Immigration Act 1971, is published in table 10 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1990" (Cm 1571), a copy of which is in the Library.

Persons granted[1] asylum in the United Kingdom

	Granted asylum[1]
1981	1,473
1982	1,727
1983	1,185
1984	689
1985	915
1986	543
1987	464
1988	975
1989	3,335
1990	1,510
1991	670

[1] Including dependants who applied with the principal applicant and those who arrived subsequently but before the principal application was decided.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time taken to determine asylum applications in the United Kingdom; and how many claims currently await determination.

Mr. Charles Wardle: For cases decided in the first quarter of 1992, excluding those under paragraph 101 of the immigration rules for failure to provide evidence in support of the asylum claim, the estimated average length of time between the receipt of the asylum application and the decision was 17½ months.

At 30 March 1992 around 61,000 cases awaited action in the asylum and special cases division.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many refugees from the conflict in Yugoslavia have been given permission to stay in the United Kingdom; what assistance they are being given; and what plans he has to assist possible arrivals of further refugees from that country.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is estimated that about 750 citizens of the former state of Yugoslavia have sought asylum in the United Kingdom up to the end of April this year on the basis of claims associated with the various conflicts in that area. All these applicants will be allowed to stay while their claims are considered. They, and any future applicants, are eligible to claim income support and housing benefits.

Hertfordshire (Boundaries)

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the Parliamentary Boundary Commission's initial proposals for Hertfordshire to be published.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the Boundary Commission for England has not yet decided when it will publish its provisional recommendations for the county of Hertfordshire, although it is likely that this will be towards the end of the review.

Fire Safety

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what inspections the local fire brigade had made of the holiday home at Capel Curig, Snowdonia,

recently subject to a fire leading to two deaths; what recommendations it had made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Gwynedd fire service inspected the Meadows outdoor centre, Capel Curig, Snowdonia on 15 March 1990. The brigade made a number of recommendations to the owners, Malborough college, Wiltshire, which dealt among other things with the means of escape in case of fire, smoke alarms, emergency lighting and general fire precautions.

Following the fire, an investigation by the brigade revealed that its fire safety requirements had not been implemented. The brigade is now preparing a full report for submission to the coroner for the purposes of the inquest.

Although the building in which the fire took place is not subject to current fire safety legislation, I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 20 May 1992 at column *142* concerning proposed new regulations that will apply to most places of work. This will include holiday centres where staff are employed. The regulations are due to come into force on 1 January 1993.

Haverigg Prison

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish details of the funding applications currently held by his Department in respect of improvement to HMP Haverigg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Extensive improvements to HM Prison Haverigg (costing some £3·4 million) have been carried out in the last four years and the following additional work is planned during the next five years:

Re-roof officers' club
Refurbish living units
Repair cladding to weavers shop
New gas supply
Refurbish dining halls
Renew drains

The following schemes are also under consideration, but no firm starting dates have yet been allocated:

Repair pathways/roads to quarters
Provision of new staff canteen
Provision of visitors' centre
Sports hall extension

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Walsall, North dated 27 January, concerning a constituent, to which the hon. Member received an interim reply on 18 March from an assistant private secretary.

Mr. Jack: I have written to the hon. Member today.

Bail

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to bring forward proposals to amend the law relating to bail.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 19 May 1992 at column *95*.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has had in respect of the amount of progress made by Britain towards achieving the United Nations target for overseas aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The funds allocated to aid for the developing countries is often discussed within international organisations. A number of British organisations have made specific representations. The Government have reaffirmed that while they accept the United Nations target and have made provision for aid to developing countries to increase in real terms, we are not in a position to set a timetable for achieving the target.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of the total budget for the United Kingdom aid programme has been spent for each year since 1979 to date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Outturn of aid for developing countries, including aid administration, as a percentage of cash limit, has been as follows:

	Per cent.
1979-80	97·53
1980-81	99·18
1981-82	94·40
1982-83	99·10
1983-84	97·81
1984-85	97·02
1985-86	97·31
1986-87	99·95
1987-88	99·94
1988-89	99·98
1989-90	99·98
1990-91	99·74

These figures exclude non-voted attributions for the United Kingdom share of spending on aid from the European Community budget.

St. Helena and Tristan da Cunha

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice has been given to the St. Helena Government on the question of derecognition of the RMT trade union.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The decision to withdraw recognition was taken by the St. Helena Government and formally conveyed to RMT by the St. Helena Shipping Company on behalf of the St. Helena Line (a company wholly owned by the St. Helena Government), which is the immediate employer of the crew. The St. Helena Government consulted ODA and the St. Helena Shipping Company about the wording of the instruction.

PRIME MINISTER

"Our Country, the Planet"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister when he received the copy of "Our Country, the Planet" by Sonny Ramphal which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received a copy of "Our Country, the Planet" by Sonny Ramphal. We are committed to ensuring the success of the Earth Summit in Rio. I was the first world leader to announce my intention of attending and I am continuing to press my colleagues to confirm their attendance. I particularly welcome the recent statement by President Bush that he will be joining us in Rio. The Government have very clearly set out their objectives for the summit. I expect to be able to agree a number of important conventions, agreements and declarations which will represent a worthwhile first step in the world's quest for sustainable development.

Earth Summit

Mr. Steen: To ask the Prime Minister how many officials and Ministers are attending the Earth Summit in June; which Departments they represent; what is the estimated cost of their travel and subsistence; and if he will make it his policy for all those representing the United Kingdom to use, wherever possible, British airlines.

The Prime Minister: The information is not yet available. I will write to my hon. Friend when it is.

Lockerbie Bombing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has had from the Government of Malta about the Libyan nationals accused of the Lockerbie bombing.

The Prime Minister: We have maintained regular contacts with the Government of Malta on all aspects of the Lockerbie bombing.

EC Committee of the Regions

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) on 11 May, *Official Report*, column *21*, if he will make it his policy that the representatives of Wales on the proposed European Community committee on the regions *(a)* include no one who has not been elected in Wales and *(b)* reflect the political balance within Wales.

The Prime Minister: As I indicated in my reply to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) on 11 May, Ministers are considering United Kingdom membership on the Committee, including the question of how best to ensure an adequate balance of interests.

EC Rebates

Q.7. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the question of whether the Council of Ministers or any other EC institution has the power to withdraw the rebates negotiated at Fontainebleau without the agreement of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so. The abatement for the United Kingdom agreed at Fontainebleau is enshrined in Community law. It cannot be amended except by unanimity, and with the approval of national Parliaments.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the sections of the Maastricht treaty which are subject to declarations or protocols concerning particular member states, and the other provisions of the treaty which do not apply to all member states, giving the names of the member states concerned in each case.

The Prime Minister: On entry into force, all the provisions of the Maastricht treaty on European union will apply to all member states, subject to relevant protocols concerning individual member states detailed below. The protocols agreed at Maastricht will become an integral part of the treaty of Rome under article 239 and will have equal legal force. Those referring to particular member states are as follows. The protocol on "the acquisition of property in Denmark" and the protocol "annexed to the Treaty of European Union and to the Treaties establishing the European Communities" relate to Denmark and Ireland respectively: the first applies to all provisions of the EC Treaties, the second to these and the provisions of the Treaty on European Union. The protocols on "Denmark", "certain provisions relating to the United Kingdom", and "certain provisions relating to Denmark" all make clear the treaty articles to which they refer. The protocols on "Portugal" and "France" are designed to preserve the interest-free credit facility afforded to the Azores and Maderia by the Banco de Portugal and France's privilege of monetary emission in its overseas territories and sole entitlement to determine the parity of the CFP franc.

Acts adopted under the protocol and social policy expressely shall not apply to the United Kingdom.

The declarations agreed by the member states and adopted at the time of signature of the treaty are not part of the treaty and do not have that legal status. Two refer to the positions of named member states, that on "monetary relations with the Republics of San Marino, the Vatican City and the Principality of Monaco" (France and Italy) and that on "the Directive of 24 November 1988 (Emissions)" (Spain and Portugal).

Environmental Guide

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister which will be the lead Department to ensure effective implementation of the Department of the Environment's publication, "Green Rights and Responsibilities: A Citizen's Guide to the Environment", issued in February.

The Prime Minister: The green rights and responsibilities guide was part of the citizens charter initiative. Similar guides were published in Wales and Scotland. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is considering the issue of a separate version. The Department of the Environment is responsible for developing the citizens charter in relation to environmental services in consultation with interested Departments.

Privy Council

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will take steps towards the abolition of the Privy Council.

The Prime Minister: No.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to discuss methods to enhance the control of the proliferation of nuclear weapons during his meeting with the United States Secretary of State on 22 May.

The Prime Minister: We frequently discuss prevention of nuclear proliferation with American colleagues at all levels. I shall be discussing a number of foreign and security policy issues with Mr. Baker on 22 May.

Gulf War

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column 494, if he will state what representations at the highest level, and to whom, were made regarding the deaths of British soldiers in the Gulf; and which British officials made the representations.

The Prime Minister: As I indicated in my answer to the hon. Member on 12 May at column 494, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, during his visit to Washington last week, drew the attention of Mr. Cheney to a letter from the families. Throughout the last 15 months the British Government have maintained close contact with the United States Administration at all levels about this tragic incident.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to deliver a protest to the United States Administration at the decision not to require United States pilots to give evidence or be examined in respect of the deaths of British soldiers killed by friendly fire in the gulf war.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) on 19 May at columns 142-43.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inspectors' Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will provide a list of the unpublished DTI inspectors' reports which have been given to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales but are not available to hon. Members.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: It would be inappropriate for me to discuss details of unpublished inspectors' reports. Such reports are disclosed, where appropriate, under the Companies Act 1948, as amended, under part XIV of the Companies Act 1985, as amended, and under the Financial Services Act 1986.

Accountancy Organisations (Royal Charters)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what powers he has to make recommendations to the Privy Council on the terms of the royal charters of the accountancy bodies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no express power to make such recommendations, although it would be normal for him to offer advice when consulted by the Privy Council in relation to applications from chartered accountancy bodies for changes in their royal charter.

Private Coal Mines

Mr. Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will state by year since 1962 the sum paid *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* at today's values, to the former owners of private coal mines, as compensation under the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946 and associated legislation.

Mr. Eggar: We have no record of any payments being made to former owners of private coal mines since 1962 in respect of compensation under the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946.

Renewable Energy Advisory Group

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to publish the report of the Renewable Energy Advisory Group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on 13 May at column *138*.

Trawsfynydd

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the present estimated cost of complete decommissioning, including post-institutional surveillance and radioactive waste storage and disposal of Trawsfynydd nuclear power station to *(a)* a green field site within the reasonable short term, *(b)* to a green field site but deferred for 100 years or thereabouts and *(c)* for the various partial decommissioning options leaving the main reactor structures in situ for an indefinite period in future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Responsibility for estimating the costs of decommissioning Trawsfynydd nuclear power station is a matter for Nuclear Electric plc.

British Coal

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the productivity of *(a)* the coal industry in Germany and *(b)* British Coal in 1990, 1991 and the current year.

Mr. Eggar: The information is as follows:

Calendar Year Productivity (kg per man hour underground)

	(a) German coal industry	*(b) United Kingdom coal industry*
1990	673	704
1991[1]	695	794
1992	n/a	[2]921

[1] The figures for 1991 and 1992 are provisional.
[2] Figures for British Coal show an increase of 16 per cent. for the first three months of 1992 over the comparable period of 1991.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the specific collieries which his Department's advisers, NM Rothschild, predict will close following privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: Rothschilds have not made any predictions on specific collieries closing following privatisation of British Coal. They were asked to analyse options for privatisation and inevitably had to do this against a range of possibilities about the demand for coal.

Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are his Department's policies on promoting the use of waste materials *(a)* as fuel in energy-from-waste incinerators and *(b)* in recycling after separation.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Trade and Industry promotes the recovery of energy and materials from waste, wherever such schemes have the potential to be economically attractive and environmentally acceptable.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the actual forecast financial contributions from industrial sources of the research, development and demonstration programmes for renewable energy run by the energy technology support unit for the years 1991 to 1998 broken down for each of the seven research programmes, biofuels, wind power, solar power, small-scale hydro, geothermal, tidal and wave power.

Mr. Eggar: Forecast external financial contributions from the renewables programme in total were £7·1 million for 1991-92 and £7·8 million for 1992-93. These totals were not broken down into individual technologies in line with the strategy published in Energy Paper 55. Targets for beyond 1992-93 will be considered as part of the current review of renewable energy strategy.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for *(a)* bringing forward the Renewables Order 1992 and *(b)* updating the guidance available for the encouragement of combined heat and power.

Mr. Eggar: I have under review the timing and policy for the next renewables order. The promotion of combined heat and power is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the progress of negotiations with the Commission of the European Communities on extending the 1988 time limit for the application of the non-fossil fuel obligation with respect to sources of renewable electricity generation.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is in discussion about this with the European Commission.

Coal and Rail Privatisations

Mr. Macklinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what properties or services of the relevant corporations, subject to the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill, are situated or provided in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Eggar: The British Coal Corporation's statutory duties do not extend to Northern Ireland, but the corporation owns two properties and has interests in Northern Ireland in the Coal Advisory Service, the contract maintenance of solid fuel heating installations and activities associated with such installation.

I understand that British Rail has ticket offices and offices and depots related to its parcels operation, situated in Northern Ireland.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Dr. Marek: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the profit or loss of the Export Credits Guarantee Department for the last 15 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: The trading results of the Export Credits Guarantee Department are reported in Trading Accounts which are laid before Parliament annually. Copies of the Trading Accounts are placed in the Library.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list in rank order by individual local education authority the number of schools in each local education authority that have gained grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forman: The information requested is as follows:

		Numbers
1.	Kent	33
2.	Lincolnshire	20
3.	Essex	16
4.	Surrey	14
5.	Norfolk	12
6.	Gloucestershire	11
7.	Bromley	10
8.	Berkshire	8
	Hertfordshire	8
	Hillingdon	8
9.	Northamptonshire	7
10.	Cumbria	6
	Dorset	6
	Hampshire	6
	Lancashire	6
	Warwickshire	6
11.	Ealing	5
	Sutton	5
12.	Birmingham	4
	Buckinghamshire	4
	Cambridgeshire	4
	Derbyshire	4
	Wandsworth	4
13.	Bedfordshire	3
	Calderdale	3
14.	Avon	2
	Barnet	2
	Bexley	2
	Bolton	2
	Brent	2
	Cheshire	2
	Kirklees	2
	Somerset	2
	Walsall	2
	Wiltshire	2
	Wolverhampton	2
15.	Bradford	1
	Croydon	1
	Devon	1
	Dudley	1
	Hammersmith and Fulham	1
	Humberside	1
	Kensington and Chelsea	1

	Numbers
Lambeth	1
Leicestershire	1
Liverpool	1
Newham	1
Nottinghamshire	1
Rochdale	1
Sandwell	1
Sheffield	1
Shropshire	1
Southwark	1
Tameside	1
Tower Hamlets	1
Waltham Forest	1
	255

The table includes 217 schools that are operating as GM; 33 that have been approved but are not yet open; and five that are "minded to approve" for GM status with effect from September 1992.

Primary School Admissions

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance he issues to local education authorities on the definition of a primary school deemed to be full for the purpose of refusing admissions.

Mr. Forth: All primary schools are required to comply, from September 1992, with the requirements of the more open enrolment provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988. Under these provisions each school has a standard number, up to which it must admit each year subject to demand. Primary school standard numbers were redefined by order in May 1991. The standard number is whichever of the following is the higher:

(i) the number derived by applying a simple formula to calculate the school's capacity at 1 May 1991;
(ii) the total number on roll on 1 May 1991 divided by the number of year groups;
(iii) the number published by the LEA or the governors as the number intended to be admitted in September 1990; and
(iv) if applicable, the admission number included in any published reorganisation proposals implemented before 1 May 1991.

The formula for assessing capacity used as part of the standard number determination is set out in DES circular 6/91. A copy of the circular can be found in the Library or supplied by the Department.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in what circumstances heads of local education authority primary schools may refuse to admit prospective pupils on the grounds of the pupils being outside the school's catchment area.

Mr. Forth: Primary and secondary schools must admit pupils up to their standard number for the year of entry. Where the number of pupils whose parents wish them to attend school exceeds the number of places available, places must be allocated in accordance with criteria published at the time parents express their preference. Prospective pupils must be admitted unless the schools has already admitted up to its standard number and those admitted have a better case for admission under the published criteria. Schools can have criteria for admissions which give priority to pupils living within a certain area, known as the school's catchment area. If the number of pupils admitted from the catchment area is less than the school's standard number, however, other pupils whose parents have requested places must be admitted in accordance with the school's admission criteria.

School Inspections

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will inform local education authorities of their prospective funding loss arising from charged school inspection arrangements.

Mr. Forman: The Government are considering the expenditure needs of local education authorities next year and are currently taking the views of the local authority associations on the range of factors bearing on local education authorities' spending, including the new arrangements for school inspection. Details of the local authority finance settlement for 1993-94, including education's share of total standard spending and individual authorities' standard spending assessments, will be announced in the autumn.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Refurbishing

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what plans exist to replace the carpets in the Palace of Westminster and in the buildings which contain hon. Members' offices; and what are the current arrangements for cleaning them by *(a)* electric Hoover and *(b)* shampoo equipment.

Mr. Beith: Carpets in the Palace of Westminster and its outbuildings are replaced on the basis of a rolling programme of planned maintenance, or whenever necessary. A new cleaning contract for the Palace and its outbuildings is being prepared. It will include among its specifications required standards for cleaning carpets.

The Serjeant at Arms includes among his responsibilities oversight of arrangements for cleaning those parts of the Palace and its outbuildings under the control of the House. Any matters of specific concern about these matters should be addressed to him.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Woolwich Arsenal

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the national importance of the listed buildings on the Woolwich arsenal site; and what plans he has for their future.

Mr. Key: Eighteen buildings on the Woolwich Arsenal site have been assessed, against the normal national criteria, as being of special architectural or historic interest and placed on the statutory list. Responsibility for those buildings lies firstly with their owner, the Ministry of Defence, which has engaged consultants to advise on future uses of the site, since it is becoming surplus to operational requirements. I understand that the MoD is also consulting closely with the Crown Estates, as owners of some of the land, the Department of the Environment's

conservation unit and English Heritage over options for the future use of the site which, as far as possible, recognise the importance to the heritage of the listed buildings there.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he has any plans to visit the Woolwich arsenal site and inspect the listed buildings.

Mr. Key: No.

SCOTLAND

Electoral Register

Mr. John Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many attainers, whose 18th birthday falls during the period of the current electoral register, were eligible to vote in Scotland on 9 April; and how many of them cast their votes at the general election on that day.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of attainers in Scotland on the 1992 electoral register shown in the monitor EL 92/1 published by the Office of Population Censuses and Statistics on 2 April is 47,732. Information about how many of them were eligible to vote and actually cast their vote on 9 April is not held centrally.

HEALTH

Waiting Lists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the numbers of patients waiting for in-patient treatment on 31 March in England for each individual health authority *(a)* in total and *(b)* by main specialty for periods under 12 months, 12 months to 24 months and over 24 months.

Mr. Sackville: Waiting time information by individual health authority and specialty at 31 March 1992 is not yet available centrally.

Computer Procurement

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on measures to prevent fraud in health service computer procurement.

Mr. Sackville: Each health authority is responsible for establishing sound financial controls to safeguard its resources. Directions to this effect were issued to all health authorities within health circular HC(91)25.

The Department issued specific guidance in 1987, "Buying information technology goods and services", on good practice in NHS computer procurement. This guidance is currently being reviewed by a joint working party of the Department and the NHS supplies authority. The work should lead to the issue of revised guidance later this year.

All procurement is monitored by internal auditors, and by external statutory auditors appointed by the Audit Commission.

Copies of the current guidance are available in the Library.

Smoking

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1), pursuant to her answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *84*, when she expects to have information or indications on the proportion of smokers in the United Kingdom and in each other European Community country later than the 1989 figures in the *British Medical Journal*;

(2) what information she receives from the European Commission on the trends in smoking in each or any parts of the European Community.

Dr. Mawhinney: Statistics on smoking prevalence in the United Kingdom are collected biennially by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in the general hospital survey and published in the following year. The 1990 figures, which showed that adult smoking had declined to 39 per cent., were published in November 1991. The 1992 figures will be available in 1993.

The European Commission does not publish regular information on trends in smoking and has not published more recent figures on the proportion of smokers in the member states of the Community than the 1989 statistics published in the *British Medical Journal*. We know of no plans to do so.

Young Offenders

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has any plans to develop Red Bank secure unit for young offenders in Newton Le Willow; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I understand that negotiations are under way about a proposal for St. Helens metropolitan borough council to take over from Lancashire county council as the controlling authority for Red Bank community home. Any plans for the development of the community home —including the secure accommodation—will be a matter for the controlling authority and the trustees of the home.

Later this year, the Government will be announcing plans for the secure accommodation needed nationally to meet its obligations under the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to abolish juvenile remands. It is too early to say whether or not Red Bank will be affected.

Dentists

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to increase the number of dentists in the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: A joint Health Departments and British Dental Association review of dental manpower needs is currently in progress. It will consider the number of dentists which will be needed over the next 40 years. There are currently 27 per cent. more dentists than there were in 1979.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the Government's policy on performance-related pay for dentists after the proposed changes in dentists' fees.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government's position on performance pay was set out in the citizens charter in July last year. The Government are committed to extending performance-related pay within the public sector. We will be discussing this issue with the profession's representatives and submitting evidence to the Doctors and Dentists Review Body later this year. The Government have already announced that there will be a fundamental review of the dentists' remuneration system.

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the number of dentists practising in the NHS in each region of England for each year since 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of dentists practising in the general dental services in each region of England for each year since 1987 is shown in the table.

Distribution of dentists in general dental service in England from 1987-1991
Number of dentists[1] [2]

Region	*30 September 1987*	*30 September 1988*	*30 September 1989*	*30 September 1990*	*30 September 1991*
Northern	799	809	849	869	881
Yorkshire	1,013	1,044	1,078	1,094	1,092
Trent	1,133	1,171	1,200	1,218	1,257
East Anglia	545	578	594	605	604
North West Thames	1,540	1,530	1,552	1,512	1,436

Region	30 September 1987	30 September 1988	30 September 1989	30 September 1990	30 September 1991
North East Thames	1,228	1,223	1,231	1,226	1,222
South East Thames	1,308	1,347	1,319	1,341	1,334
South West Thames	1,216	1,242	1,249	1,240	1,242
Wessex	886	907	938	949	939
Oxford	777	804	808	826	828
South Western	1,150	1,167	1,195	1,209	1,217
West Midlands	1,335	1,352	1,373	1,395	1,396
Mersey	701	728	745	764	765
North Western	1,134	1,168	1,200	1,232	1,238
TOTAL	14,765	15,070	15,351	15,480	15,451

[1]Number of general dental practitioners includes principals and assistants.
[2]Each general dental practitioner is recorded by the family health services authority in which the majority of their earnings were incurred.

Central Middlesex Hospital

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she received the report of the Mental Health Act commissioners following their inspection of the Central Middlesex hospital's mental health unit on 9 April.

Mr. Yeo: Reports by the Mental Health Act commissioners are confidential management documents, which are sent directly to local management for their consideration and further action. We have not seen the report to which the hon. Member refers.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many visits the Mental Health Act commissioners have made to the Central Middlesex hospital's mental health unit in the past 12 months.

Mr. Yeo: Three.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last met the chairman of the Parkside health authority to discuss the Central Middlesex hospital's mental health unit.

Mr. Yeo: We have not met the chairman of Parkside district health authority to discuss the Central Middlesex mental health unit.

Improvement Programme, Darlington

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the annual cost improvement programme in Darlington health authority in each financial year since 1988-89.

Mr. Sackville: The figures are:

	£000s
1988-89	585
1989-90	614
1990-91	367

1990-91 was the last year for which this information was collected centrally.

Mental Health

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the members of the task force to further the development of locally based mental health services; what are their terms of reference; when they will report; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: We are currently considering the membership and terms of reference of the task force.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the statistical bulletin containing data on mental illness for the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 will be published.

Mr. Yeo: A statistical bulletin "Personal Social Services: provision for people with mental illness in England 1980-90" was published in December 1991. In addition, a bulletin on "NHS Hospital Activity Statistics for England" was published in February 1992, providing information on the number of in-patients, out-patients, beds, ward attenders in the mental illness specialty up to 1990-91. "Information on NHS day care facilities", containing data on mental illness from April 1987 to March 1990 was published in September 1991. Copies of these publications have been placed in the Library. More detailed figures relating to mental illness are planned for publication later this year and next year.

Buxton Chair

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the outcome of the investigation into the use of the Buxton chair to restrain patients.

Mr. Yeo: A press report earlier this year about the Buxton chair was prompted by a discussion document published by the organisation Counsel and Care on the use of restraint in residential care. Counsel and Care found no evidence of the chair being used incorrectly. Misuse should not occur in a care home where the principles underlying the Registered Homes Act 1984 have been adopted and where the guidance issued under the Act is being followed. The possibility of the inappropriate or unnecessary restraint of any resident is a matter for serious concern. This is recognised in the Act which gives registration authorities power to act against any establishment where bad care practice is found.

Cost Improvement Programmes

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the cost improvement programmes for the current year for each district health authority in the Northern region; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally. The regional health authority is responsible for monitoring cost improvement programmes of individual districts. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Peter Carr, chairman of the Northern regional health authority, for details.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in dealing with the unforeseen consequences of the confidentiality provisions in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990.

Mr. Sackville: The Government yesterday introduced in another place a Bill to make certain specified relaxations in the restrictions on the disclosure of information by licensed clinicians imposed by section 33(5) of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990. The Bill has been published today.

Since the 1990 Act came into force, practical experience has shown that the restrictions were in some respects too tightly drawn and they have led to unintended risks and difficulties. The Bill therefore proposes to put matters right by making carefully limited changes in one section of the Act, which in other respects is working well. It seeks to ease the restrictions on the release of information about patients who receive infertility treatment. The circumstances in which disclosure would be permitted would be closely defined.

The Bill is solely about the disclosure of information falling within section 31(2) of the 1990 Act by a licensed person. Except in specified circumstances the patient's consent will be required before any identifying information can be disclosed.

Births, Islington

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has as to the numbers and proportions of types of childbirth occurring under the auspices of the different hospitals serving the Islington area.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not collected centrally.

Community Health Councils

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the future of community health councils.

Mr. Sackville: Community health councils (CHCs) will continue to carry out their role of representing the interests in the health service of the public in their districts. My hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State wrote to health authorities earlier this year to ensure that they were fully aware of what is expected from their relationship with CHCs. A copy of the letter (ML(92)1) is available in the Library.

HIV Infection

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many payments have been made to non-haemophiliacs infected with HIV as a result of NHS blood/tissue transfers, or to families of the deceased, following the announcement by his Department on 17 February that special provisions would be made.

Mr. Sackville: The first applications for payment were received by the Department on 12 May. Applications are being considered individually and decisions will be made as soon as possible.

WALES

Fluoride

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress that has been made in artificially increasing the fluoride content of the water supply in Wales during the most recent 12-month period for which information is available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There has been no increase in the area covered by fluoridation during the 12-month period ending 31 March 1992. Fluoridation is a matter for local determination.

Hotel Grants

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has has with the chairman of the Wales tourist board concerning the number of cases agreed for staged payments from hotel proprietors and hotel companies to the board under the reclaim procedure in the last three years; what impact this will have on *(a)* the availability of funds for hotel grants to other applicants, *(b)* on jobs in the tourist industry and *(c)* on the annual government grant to the Wales tourist board.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The terms and conditions of grants, including the repayment arrangements, made by the Wales tourist board under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 have been approved by the Welsh Office. Individual decisions regarding the terms of repayment of grant are at the discretion of the board and each case is considered on its merits.

Provided the WTB otherwise fulfils its annual target for the repayment of loans and grants, a decision by the board to allow staged repayments would have no effect on the availability of grants to other applicants or the level of Government grant to the board.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the amount of the grant for improvements paid in 1989-90 to the Ynyscedwyn Arms hotel, Ystradgynlais by the Wales tourist board; in what circumstances such grants are reclaimed by the Wales tourist board; and what arrangements, under what authority, have been made for staging repayment of grant by the Ynyscedwyn Arms hotel.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In July 1989 the Wales tourist board approved grant under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 of £17,500 for the Ynyscedwyn Arms hotel. Only £16,592 has been taken up.

The board will normally seek full recovery of grant in cases where the relevant assets are sold within three years of the last payment of grant. Where the assets are sold between three and 10 years after the final grant payment, the board may seek only part recovery. Individual decisions regarding the terms of repayment are at the discretion of the board and each case is judged on its merits.

In this case, I understand that the hotel has not yet been sold and that the board is still in discussion with the owners about the terms of any repayment.

Trawsfynydd

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the present estimated cost of maintaining Lake Trawsfynydd in a condition sufficient to minimise

future radiation exposure of people nearby, following the closure of Trawsfynydd nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Nuclear Electric owns the lake and is responsible for maintaining it to the required standards. The costs of the Government's monitoring programme will be only a small part of the total cost of maintaining the lake—and are wholly recoverable from Nuclear Electric.

Public Sector Housing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to increase supplementary credit approvals for public sector housing estate management and improvement programmes; and what provision increased tenant participation will play in such initiatives.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the estate partnership programme, up to £6 million will be available in this financial year to support projects aimed at alleviating exceptional problems on local authority housing estates. I would expect successful schemes to incorporate solid arrangements for tenant participation and consultation.

Abattoirs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review the livestock slaughtering industry in Wales to determine the impact on small abattoirs of the new EC standards; and if he will press for further exemption by raising the current weekly limit of 12 livestock units.

Mr. David Hunt: EC directive 91/497 has provision for derogations from some of its structural standards for abattoirs processing up to 12 livestock units per week. The directive also contains provision for similar derogations for abattoirs with a throughput of up to 20 units per week provided they fall into a limited number of specific categories and subject to the approval in each individual case of the Standing Veterinary Committee. It is expected that very few abattoirs in Great Britain would qualify for this treatment, but any applications wil be considered on their individual merits.

Council House Sales

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current levels of capital receipts from the sale of council houses held by Welsh local authorities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest information available relates to 31 March 1991. At that date, local councils held £21·5 million of usable capital receipts from council house sales that they had not yet spent.

Youth Agency

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce the full membership of the newly established Youth Agency in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The chairman and vice-chairman of the Wales Youth Agency were appointed on 1 April 1992. We expect to be able to announce the full membership of the agency's management board shortly.

Bryn Deva School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will visit the Bryn Deva county primary school, Connah's quay, Deeside, Clwyd;

(2) if he will meet the governors, parent-teacher association, and staff of the Bryn Deva county primary school, Deeside, Clwyd.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans at present to do so.

School Surplus Land

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidance to local education authorities that funds raised from the sale of surplus land at a school should be spent on improvements at that school.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans to interfere with local education authorities' freedom to reinvest capital receipts derived from the disposal of school land as they see fit or to alter the present legal requirement that 50 per cent. of such receipts be set aside for the redemption of debt.

Llwyncelyn Centre, Swansea

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received, and on what date, for a meeting about Llwyncelyn Centre, Swansea, since his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *121*.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Community Hospital, Holywell

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of his response to the submission by Clwyd health authority for a new community hospital in Holywell, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Clwyd health authority is currently revising its approval in principle submission to reflect more closely the requirements of the mandatory health building procedures for the NHS in Wales and, in particular, to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of the preferred option and its financial viability.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide details of the timetable for consideration of the Clwyd health authority submission for a new community hospital in Holywell, Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is a matter for the health authority which is currently finalising its approval in principle submission.

Female Family Doctors

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many family doctors are female in each of the health authorities in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The information which relates to 1 October 1991, is given in the table:

Family health service authority	*Female*
Clwyd	39
Dyfed	50
Gwent	51

Family health service authority	Female
Gwynedd	20
Mid Glamorgan	48
Powys	14
South Glamorgan	65
West Glamorgan	35

Measles and Whooping Cough

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of *(a)* measles and *(b)* whooping cough occurred in each of the health authorities in Wales in the last three years.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of notifications of *(a)* measles and *(b)* whooping cough for each of the health authorities in Wales for the last three years are shown in the table:

	(a) Notifications of measles			*(b) Notifications of whooping cough*		
	1989	*1990*	*[1]1991*	*1989*	*1990*	*[1]1991*
Clwyd	89	52	114	67	98	36
East Dyfed	205	31	17	85	118	36
Pembrokeshire	42	21	19	22	21	25
Gwent	485	120	116	34	195	46
Gwynedd	42	20	57	52	158	40
Mid Glamorgan	325	221	130	78	201	34
Powys	71	5	4	20	15	0
South Glamorgan	512	89	67	67	210	45
West Glamorgan	100	39	30	254	145	31
WALES	1,871	598	554	679	1,161	293

[1] 1991 figures are provisional.
Source: 1991 OPCS
1990 OPCS Monitor Series MB2 (quarterly)
1989 Communicable disease statistics (OPCS series MB2 No. 16)

Pension Allowances

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current guidance issued to the non-departmental public bodies in Wales concerning the criteria and prior departmental authorisation required for the payment of ex-gratia, severance, redundancy or early retirement pension allowances or bonuses for departing middle and senior management; when it was issued; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. David Hunt: The founding legislation for a non-departmental public body requires its terms and conditions, which include superannuation and early retirement compensation schemes, to be approved by the Secretary of State for Wales and the Minister for the Civil Service. Approval is arranged individually for each body.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of submissions for trust status from within Clwyd and the dates by which he expects to determine them.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Following the submission of expressions of interest last year, the three health units in Clwyd health authority are among the 14 invited to prepare applications for NHS trust status in April 1993. Decisions on whether to proceed are entirely a matter for the individual units in the light of local circumstance. In the event that applications are received, statutory public consultation will be undertaken before any decisions are reached. I would expect an announcement on the outcome of the application process to be made this autumn.

GP Fund Holders

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioner fund-holding practices there are in each of the health authorities in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: There are 26 general practitioner fund-holding practices in Wales, including 10 in Clwyd; four each in Gwent, Mid Glamorgan and West Glamorgan; two in Dyfed; and one each in Powys and South Glamorgan.

Family Doctor Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the amount of cash given to the family doctor service for each of the last three years.

Mr. David Hunt: Cash expended on the general medical services in Wales for the financial year 1989-90 and 1990-91 was as follows:

1989-90: £95·3 million
1990-91: £114·6 million
Figures for 1991-92 are not yet available.
Source: Appropriation accounts

School Meals

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the local education authorities in Wales which provide a cooked lunchtime meal for pupils; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement concerning his policy as to the quality and nutrition of school meals; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not held centrally. Local education authorities are responsible for determining the content and presentation of school meals.

Improving the diets of schoolchildren is a very important part of the Government's overall commitment to raising nutritional standards.

The catering staff of each local education authority are aware of developments in dietary and nutritional research and have access to a range of expert advice. A number of authorities have introduced healthy eating options on school meals menus.

Buses

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his policy towards subsidy for bus routes in rural Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Local authorities determine levels of subsidy for socially necessary services in rural areas. Assistance towards certain items of capital expenditure is also available from the Department to bus operators under the rural transport innovation grant scheme.

Further Education Funding Council

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce the names of the members of the Further Education Funding Council for Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The following have accepted my invitation to become members of the Further Education Council for Wales:

Mrs. Penelope Ryan: Principal, Gorseinon College, West Glamorgan.
Jeff Cocks: Principal, Pontypridd Technical College, Mid Glamorgan.
Dr. Ken Thomas: recently retired from HM Inspectorate of Schools in South West England.
Dr. John Walters: Open University, Cardiff.
Mrs. Susan Stansford: Chair of Governors, Yale Sixth Form College, Clwyd.
Grant Walshe: South Wales Regional Director, Barclays Bank plc.
Huw Jones: Chief Executive, Barcud and Sain Cyf, Gwynedd.
David Margetts: Chairman, Elkay Electrical Manufacturing Ltd., Chief Executive, Powys TEC.
Richard Webster: Managing Director, Midcast Engineering (Wales) Ltd., Maesteg; Member of Mid Glamorgan TEC.
Stephen Dunster: Treasurer, West Glamorgan CC; Financial Adviser, Assembly of Welsh Counties.

Health Authority Funding

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to give extra money to under-funded health authorities in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Spending on the NHS in Wales has risen from £481 million in 1979-80 to 1,946 million in 1992-93, representing an increase of 67 per cent. above inflation. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave on 4 February at columns *125-28* for detailed information about allocations to individual district health authorities.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by region and for Great Britain as a whole, separately for males and females, how many 16 and 17-year-olds for each month since September 1991 have made applications for income support on grounds of extreme hardship; how many have been granted or refused; if he will give the information he has about the grounds on which applications were turned down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: No information is held as to the sex of applicants for income support under the severe hardship provision. Applications for income support from young people who are not at risk of severe hardship are unsuccessful. Such information as is available is in the tables:

Scotland

	Total	*Successful*	*Refused*
1991			
September	1,189	927	262
October	1,349	1,106	243
November	1,153	940	213
December	927	791	136
1992			
January	1,656	1,386	270
February	1,593	1,337	256
March	1,676	1,363	313

North Eastern

	Total	*Successful*	*Refused*
1991			
September	932	738	194
October	1,044	812	232
November	936	757	179
December	709	584	125
1992			
January	1,434	1,204	230
February	1,283	985	298
March	1,231	1,008	223

North Western

	Total	*Successful*	*Refused*
1991			
September	671	517	154
October	710	555	155
November	640	515	125
December	497	406	91
1992			
January	1,100	918	182
February	956	790	166
March	1,125	934	191

Midlands

	Total	*Successful*	*Refused*
1991			
September	695	547	148
October	697	550	147
November	700	558	142
December	512	446	66
1992			
January	1,158	980	178
February	1,030	879	151
March	1,094	876	218

Wales and South Western

	Total	*Successful*	*Refused*
1991			
September	685	558	127
October	687	549	138
November	710	591	119
December	512	446	66
1992			

	Total	Successful	Refused
January	1,007	883	124
February	927	780	147
March	967	814	153

London North

	Total	Successful	Refused
1991			
September	579	475	104
October	617	509	108
November	542	451	91
December	420	365	55
1992			
January	823	725	98
February	797	675	122
March	875	736	139

London South

	Total	Successful	Refused
1991			
September	657	539	118
October	677	532	145
November	608	505	103
December	449	382	67
1992			
January	958	812	146
February	882	741	141
March	964	818	146

Great Britain

	Total	Successful	Refused
1991			
September	5,408	4,301	1,107
October	5,781	4,613	1,168
November	5,289	4,317	972
December	4,093	3,442	651
1992			
January	8,136	6,908	1,228
February	7,468	6,187	1,281
March	7,935	6,551	1,380

Source: Severe Hardship Claims Unit Database.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each region and for Great Britain as a whole for each quarter since September 1991 how many income support and unemployment benefit claimants have (i) successfully and (ii) unsuccessfully claimed income support under the hardship rules, showing those whose claim was in doubt due to *(a)* not actively seeking work, *(b)* refusing suitable employment, and *(c)* availability for work.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to review the rules on income support whereby money due, but not yet paid to a claimant, is taken into account in assessing that benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: We have today introduced regulations to ensure that where an occupational pension scheme has suspended or reduced payments because it has insufficient funds, the amount of the then unpaid entitlement will not be taken into account as a resource. This removes a technical obstacle which might have prevented pensioners, payment of whose pension was interrupted, from claiming income support under the normal rules.

Pensions

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many weekly pensions paid by post constitute a lesser sum than the stamp used to despatch them.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. It would, however, be very exceptional for payment to be made in this way.

If the payable rate of retirement pension is £2 per week or less, payment is made once a year in arrears and usually paid by automated credit transfer. The annual payment is made shortly before Christmas by the Benefits Agency in Newcastle and includes payment of the Christmas bonus.

Vibration White Finger

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has to extend the industries and occupations to which claims for disablement benefit arising from vibration white finger can be made; and whether he will make a statement.

(2) when he expects the review by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council into the current terms of prescription for hand/arm vibration syndromes to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: I am advised on occupational diseases by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council. The council is expected to report on hand/arm vibration syndrome, which includes vibration white finger, towards the end of this year. We have no plans at present to extend current provisions for this condition.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage disability was awarded for each person granted disablement benefit as a consequence of vibration white finger during the last 12-month period for which statistics are available.

Miss Widdecombe: Information about awards of disablement benefit are a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Maxwell Pension Funds

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *95*, what advice he has given to the National Westminster bank in connection with the pensioners of Mirror Group Newspapers and other Maxwell Group pensioners in response to the second report of the Social Security Committee, Session 1991-92, on pension funds.

Miss Widdecombe: We have given the National Westminster bank no advice in connection with pensioners of Maxwell pension schemes.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response he will make to the recommendations of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council regarding industrial disablement benefit for carpal tunnel syndrome.

Mr. Scott: We have received the report from the council and we are studying the recommendations.

Mrs. Pauline Bettinson

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will institute an inquiry into the handling of the mobility allowance application from Mrs. Pauline Bettinson, Lynton gardens, Lowestoft by the Benefits Agency, including delays by the agency in answering letters from the hon. Member for Waveney, the procedures for handling the claim and the request for compensation for the inconvenience caused by delays in processing of the claim.

Miss Widdecombe: Following Mrs. Bettinson's successful appeal to the medical appeals tribunal, full arrears of mobility allowance were sent to her on 23 April 1992. I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that he wrote to my hon. Friend on 15 May 1992. He has arranged for the full circumstances of Mrs. Bettinson's claim to be investigated and will write further to my hon. Friend as soon as this has been completed.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Political Settlement

13. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about progress towards a political settlement in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The current political talks recommenced on 29 April. I welcome their continuance.

Cross-Border Security

14. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross-border security.

Mr. Mates: Cross-border security is regularly considered at meetings of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference. At the meeting on 27 April both Governments re-affirmed their determination to enhance and strengthen security co-operation.

Residents Parking

15. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration has been given to introducing a residents parking scheme for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: No legal power currently exists in Northern Ireland to permit the introduction of a residents' parking scheme, but consideration is being given to the inclusion of such powers in future legislation.

Political Talks

16. **Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to conclude the talks he is holding with Northern Ireland political party leaders; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The talks, which resumed on 29 April, have a three-month period available to them.

26. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress is being made in the talks involving the political parties in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain).

Constitutional Reform

17. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he proposes to recommend any change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls).

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he proposes to recommend any changes in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain).

Terrorist Groups

18. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what evidence has emerged over the last 12 months of new supplies of weapons, ammunition, or finance being provided to the Provisional IRA and other terrorist groups from foreign nations or agencies controlled by such nations; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am aware of no evidence of such supplies in the past 12 months, but a number of the atrocities committed in that period have undoubtedly involved arms and explosives supplied by the Libyans before the seizure of the Eksund in 1987.

Education (Selection)

19. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy towards selection at 11-plus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: While I will always be willing to consider carefully any scheme for reorganisation which emerges through the statutory development proposal procedures, I have no plans to require school authorities to change their current arrangements.

Electricity Privatisation

20. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the privatisation of electricity in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: Contracts for the sale of the four power stations formerly owned by Northern Ireland Electricity were signed on 6 March. Transfer of ownership of two of them is subject to the completion of financing arrangements which is expected shortly. The flotation of Northern Ireland Electricity plc is planned for late autumn.

DHSS Tenderers

21. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the names of firms removed from the list of selected tenders by the DHSS and subsequently restored.

Mr. Hanley: One firm was temporarily removed from the health and personal social services select list of tenderers for the market testing of support services. This firm was reinstated within the past two months and my noble Friend does not think it would be proper to disclose details of the firm concerned.

Tourism

22. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on tourism within Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: Last year, 1991, was the third record year in a row for the industry, with an 18 per cent. increase in pure holiday visitors. Extra resources have been given to the Northern Ireland tourist board to promote the area as a holiday destination and improve its tourist product, and the board's corporate plan for the next three years will be published shortly. I am confident that the tourist industry can make an increasing contribution to economic development in Northern Ireland.

Urban Centres (Bombings)

23. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will consider taking additional measures to restore the fabric and commercial life of urban centres hit by major terrorist bombs.

Mr. Mates: The Government continue to keep under review the very extensive measures designed to restore the fabric and commercial life of urban centres hit by major terrorist bombs, but there are no plans to initiate any additional measures at this time.

Road Schemes

24. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which major road schemes are planned in the next three years for the constituency of Strangford.

Mr. Atkins: Stage 1 of the improvement of the Purdysburn road, Belfast is programmed to start in 1994-95.

Terrorism (Financing)

25. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in the past six months in tackling the financing of terrorism.

Mr. Mates: The Government attach a very high priority to cutting off sources of terrorist finance and are pressing on to implement the hard-hitting confiscation scheme contained in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. The other financial provisions of that Act have already been brought into use.

Housing Executive

28. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he intends to take to ensure that funding levels are increased for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to a level equal to housing need.

Mr. Atkins: The total resources available to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in 1992-93 will be about £486 million. I am confident that this will be sufficient to enable the executive to continue the progress that it has made in recent years both in reducing the urgent waiting list and in improving housing conditions in Northern Ireland.

Disabled Facilities Grant

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when his Department plans to announce the outcome of the recent review of the disabled facilities grant system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1983, grants for disabled facilities are available within the provision of the renovation grants scheme. While there has been no recent review relating specifically to the disabled facilities grant in Northern Ireland, a draft housing order will shortly be laid before Parliament which will, among other things, seek to introduce a revised renovation grants scheme for private sector dwellings. The revised scheme will, in the main, mirror the scheme that has operated in England and Wales since July 1990 under the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and will contain a specific disabled facilities grant.

Expenditure and European Community Transfers

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was *(a)* the total public expenditure and *(b)* the estimated European Community transfers in Northern Ireland in each of the latest five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Mates: The total expenditure within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for the past five complete financial years was as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1987-88	4,828
1988-89	5,436
1989-90	5,724
1990-91	5,870
1991-92	6,449

Northern Ireland's largest single source of European Community funding is the guarantee section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. The bulk of such receipts are disbursed centrally by the Intervention Board Executive Agency—IBEA—and details on a regional basis are not available. The following amounts, however, have been identified as receipts from the three structural funds:

Year	£ million
1987-88	111
1988-89	96
1989-90	95
1990-91	110
1991-92	156

Note: Figures for 1991-92 are, in both cases, provisional.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will respond to the proposals by the Northern Ireland milk marketing board to reform the board; when he will table the new legislation; and if he will make a statement about the future of the Northern Ireland milk marketing board.

Mr. Hanley: In common with its Great Britain counterparts, the milk marketing board for Northern Ireland has submitted its proposals for reform to the Government. These proposals are currently being considered.

The Government intend to introduce legislation this Session to facilitate the transformation of the milk marketing boards into non-statutory organisations to bring benefits to both producers and consumers.

EMPLOYMENT

Expenditure

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will show for Great Britain how much expenditure, excluding administration costs, at cash and constant prices, has been spent in each year since 1987-88 on *(a)* employment training and the earlier programmes it replaced, *(b)* youth training and the earlier YTS, *(c)* enterprise allowance scheme, *(d)* job clubs and *(e)* restart courses; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following table shows expenditure for Great Britain at cash and constant 1991-92 prices, excluding administration costs, on each year since 1987-88, on *(a)* employment training, *(b)* youth training, *(c)* enterprise allowance scheme, *(d)* job clubs and *(e)* restart.

	Employment training[4]		YT[3,4]		Enterprise allowance scheme[4]		Jobclubs[5]		Restart courses[5]	
Year	Cash	Constant	Cash	Constant	Cash	Constant	Cash	Constant	Cash	Constant
1987-88	1,328·0	1,756·9	1,007·3	1,332·6	189·9	251·2	14·8	19·5	6·8	8·9
1988-89	1,290·0	1,591·6	993·2	1,225·4	191·5	236·2	17·4	21·4	5·0	6·1
1989-90	1,106·6	1,281·0	976·0	1,129·8	167·2	193·5	23·4	27·0	5·1	5·9
1990-91	1,076·0	1,151·32	816·5	873·6	127·7	136·6	26·5	28·3	5·4	5·7
1991-92[1]	848·6	848·6	[2]848·5	848·5	94·9	94·9	38·5	38·5	10·1	10·1

[1] Provisional.
[2] The 1991-92 figure includes costs for YT and credits.
[3] YT figures do not include cost for community industry.
[4] Figures include the associated marketing and evaluation and research costs for each programme.
[5] Inclusive of VAT where appropriate.

Notes:
1. The figures relate to total expenditure on externally provided job clubs and the staff costs associated with those run by the employment service.
2. Restart courses, all of which are run by outside providers, were introduced in the 1986-87 financial year. It is not possible to identify separately the restart element of the programme prior to 1988-89. The figures for 1987-88 are the best estimate of restart course expenditure in those years.
3. Constant prices were calculated by the use of GDP deflator index from the Chancellors "Financial Statement and Budget Report" published in March 1992.

Training, Darlington

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what number of employment training and youth training places were available in Darlington for each financial year from 1988-89; and what number will be available during 1992-93.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested.

At 29 March 1992, there were approximately 3,400 people on employment training and approximately 4,400 people on youth training in the Durham training and enterprise council area, of which Darlington is a part.

Trade Union Commissioner

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost of running the office of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members in the 1991-92 financial year and the amount of money spent on publicity for this office in 1991-92; and how many cases were *(a)* taken up by the office, *(b)* taken to court by the office and *(c)* won in court by trade union members supported by the office in 1991-92.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand that the total cost of running the office of the independent Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members in the 1991-92 financial year was £289,701. Of this, £12,749 was spent on publicity. I also understand that during this period the commissioner granted assistance to 14 applications; that court proceedings were brought in six of these cases; and that all six cases resulted in orders from the court in favour of the assisted persons.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will publish a table showing the proportions of *(a)* men and *(b)* women broken down by ethnic origin who are working as (i) full-time employees, (ii) part-time employees and (iii) self-employed.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available estimates are given in the table.

Persons in employment by sex and ethnic origin; average, spring 1989-91
Persons of working age (16-59/64)[2]

Great Britain
Per cent.

	All origins[3]	*White*	*Ethnic minority groups*				
			All	*West Indian/ Guyanese*	*Indian*	*Pakistani/ Bangladeshi*	*All other origins*[3]
Men in employment[4]							
(thousands = 100 per cent.)	14,399	13,710	592	112	207	102	171
Full-time employees	78	78	72	81	69	67	73
Part-time employees	3	3	5	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	7
Self-employed	17	17	20	11	26	24	18
Women in employment[4]							
(thousands = 100 per cent.)	10,750	10,279	399	108	134	31	126
Full-time employees	53	52	62	69	62	48	59
Part-time employees	39	39	26	25	25	[1]—	27
Self-employed	7	7	9	[1]—	11	[1]—	11

Source: Labour Force Surveys
[1] Less than 10,000 in cell: estimate not shown.
[2] The upper age limit is 64 for men and 59 for women.
[3] Includes those who did not state origin.
[4] Includes those of mixed origin.
[5] Including those on Government employment or training programmes and employees not stating whether full-time/part-time. The full-time classification is based on respondents self-assessment.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will publish a table showing unemployment rates by sex, age and ethnic origin for the period 1989 to 1991 using the latest labour force survey.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available estimates are given in the table.

ILO unemployment rates by sex, age and ethnic origin: average, spring 1989-1991
Persons aged 16 and over

Great Britain
Per cent.

	All origins[2]	*White*	*Ethnic minority groups*				
			All	*West Indian/ Guyanese*	*Indian*	*Pakistani/ Bangladeshi*	*All other origins*[3]
All persons							
All aged 16 and over	7	7	13	14	10	21	11
16–24	11	11	20	24	16	25	18
25–44	7	6	11	11	8	19	10
45–59-64	6	6	11	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
60–65 and over[4]	5	5	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Men							
All aged 16 and over	8	7	13	15	10	21	11
16–24	12	12	22	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
25–44	7	6	11	[1]—	8	19	10
45–64	7	7	12	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
65 and over	7	6	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Women							
All aged 16 and over	7	7	12	12	10	24	11
16–24	10	9	19	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
25–44	7	7	10	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
45–59	5	5	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
60 and over	4	4	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—

Source: Labour Force Surveys.
[1] Less than 10,000 in cell: estimate not shown.
[2] Includes those who did not state origin.
[3] Includes those of mixed origin.
[4] Includes those over state retirement age.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will publish a table showing employment by industry and ethnic origin for the period 1989 to 1991 for *(a)* men and *(b)* women broken down into (i) whites and (ii) ethnic minorities.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available estimates are given in the table.

Employment+ by industry and ethnic origin: average spring 1989-91

Persons in employment[2] aged 16 and over — *Great Britain Thousands*

SIC 1980[3]	*Males*		*Females*	
	White	*Ethnic minority groups*	*White*	*Ethnic minority groups*
All industries[4]	13,726	580	10,600	393
0 Agriculture, forestry, fishing	420	[1]—	117	[1]—
1 Energy and water supply	472	[1]—	88	[1]—
2 Extraction of minerals, metal manufacture, etc	590	15	188	[1]—
3 Metal goods, engineering and vehicles	1,887	74	520	22
4 Other manufacturing	1,369	62	844	44
44/55 Footwear, clothing and leather goods	83	12	208	20
5 Construction	1,725	29	187	[1]—
6 Distribution, hotels, catering and repairs	2,235	168	2,651	96
61/63 Wholesale distribution	582	20	279	11
64/65 Retail distribution	1,101	87	1,626	57
66 Hotels and catering	323	53	710	28
7 Transport and communications	1,158	65	351	18
79 Postal services and telecommunications	331	21	125	[1]—
8 Banking and finance, etc	1,404	59	1,328	45
83 Business services	803	36	681	23
9 Other services	2,431	100	4,301	156
91 Public administration, national defence, etc	870	23	627	25
93 Education	502	15	1,144	22
95 Medical/health/veterinary services	243	29	994	59
96 Other services to the public[5]	288	19	1,112	41

Source: Labour Force Surveys.

[1] Less than 10,000 in cell: estimate not shown.

[2] Excluding those on Government employment and training programmes.

[3] Results are shown for all SIC 1980 divisions, and for classes accounting for at least 30,000 persons from ethnic minority groups.

[4] The totals include those who did not specify industry.

[5] Comprises all other public services excluding sanitary, research and development, recreational and domestic services.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will publish a table showing employment by broad occupation by ethnic origin and by sex for the period 1989 to 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available estimates are given in the table.

Employment[2] by broad occupation, ethnic origin and sex; average: spring 1989-1991 — *Great Britain*
Employees and self employed aged 16 and over — *Per cent.*

	All origins[3]	*White*	*Ethnic minority groups*				
			All	*West Indian/ Guyanese*	*Indian*	*Pakistani/ Bangladeshi*	*All other origins[4]*
All persons							
All (thousands = 100 per cent.)	25,467	24,326	8,916	217	337	127	291
All non-manual occupations	57	57	57	47	60	45	67
Managerial and professional	33	33	34	26	37	27	43
Clerical and related	16	16	16	17	16	10	17
Other non-manual	8	8	8	4	7	8	7
All manual occupations	43	43	42	52	40	54	33
Craft and similar	16	16	15	16	14	17	8
General labourers	1	1	1	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Other manual	27	27	27	36	25	36	24
Men							
All (thousands = 100 per cent.)	14,401	13,726	580	108	205	100	167
All non-manual occupations	48	48	49	32	59	40	64
Managerial and professional	36	36	36	20	43	28	48
Clerical and related	5	5	6	[1]—	9	[1]—	8
Other non-manual	6	6	7	[1]—	6	[1]—	7
All manual occupations	52	52	51	68	41	59	36
Craft and similar	25	25	24	28	16	17	12
General labourers	1	1	1	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Other manual	26	26	26	39	24	41	24
Women							
All (thousands = 100 per cent.)	11,066	10,600	393	109	133	27	124
All non-manual occupations	68	68	68	63	62	64	72
Managerial and professional	29	29	31	33	28	[1]—	35
Clerical and related	30	30	29	26	27	[1]—	30

	All origins[3]	White	Ethnic minority groups: All	West Indian/ Guyanese	Indian	Pakistani/ Bangladeshi	All other origins[4]
Other non-manual	10	10	9	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
All manual occupations	32	31	31	37	38	36	28
Craft and similar	4	4	4	[1]—	11	[1]—	[1]—
General labourers	0	0	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Other manual	28	28	27	33	27	[1]—	25

[1] Less than 10,000 in cell; estimate not shown.
[2] Including those not stating employment status.
[3] Includes those who did not state origin.
[4] Includes those of mixed origin.

Source: Labour Force Survey.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will publish a table showing unemployment rates by ethnic origin in Greater London for people aged 16 years and over in 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is as follows:

ILO unemployment rates in Greater London by ethnic origin (persons aged 16 and over)

Average spring 1989-91	Per cent.
All origins[1]	7
White	7
Ethnic minority groups	13
West Indian/Guyanese	11
Indian	12
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	12
All others[2]	14

Source: Labour Force Surveys.
[1] Includes those who did not state origin.
[2] Includes those of mixed origin.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Rabies

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if a vaccine now exists which can guarantee complete immunity against rabies.

Mr. Soames: Modern vaccines are effective. However, no vaccine can guarantee complete immunity in all animals.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the European Commission to publish its proposals on the harmonisation of rabies prevention measures in the EC.

Mr. Soames: We expect a proposal shortly.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards the rabies orders currently in force in the United Kingdom; and what assessment he has made of how effective they have been in preventing the outbreak of rabies over the last 20 years.

Mr. Soames: Our present rabies orders have been very effective in preventing any outbreak of rabies outside quarantine and provide us with the means to control an outbreak should one occur. They reflect the Government's determination to maintain this country's freedom from rabies.

Bee Disease

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make available to bee-keepers supplies of products for the suitable treatment of bees infected with the parasite varroa jacobsonni.

Mr. Curry: Supplies of a suitable product are already available from my Ministry to bee-keepers with colonies in which the presence of the varroa jacobsoni mite has been confirmed and where immediate treatment is considered necessary.

Pesticides

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been undertaken by his Department into the use of the pesticides atrazine and simazine; and if he will make a statement on their use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: The agricultural use of atrazine and simazine is monitored through the studies carried out by the MAFF Pesticide Usage Survey Group. Recent reports show that in England and Wales approximately 41 tonnes of atrazine are used per year, primarily on maize. The major uses of simazine are on beans, peas and in orchards where approximately 140 tonnes are used annually. In addition there are major non-agricultural uses of both atrazine and simazine.

Abattoirs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact of the new EC abattoir standard regulation on the United Kingdom slaughtering industry; if he will make a statement on the exemption proposed for the United Kingdom; and what are the exemptions applicable in each of the other EC countries.

Mr. Soames: The EC abattoir standard is set out in an EC directive (91/497/EEC) on the hygiene and marketing of fresh meat which will be implemented in the United Kingdom by the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992 the draft of which has recently been circulated for consultation. Over half of British meat is already produced in abattoirs approved as meeting the EC standard. We anticipate there will be no shortage of slaughtering capacity in Great Britain after 1992 although some rationalisation of the industry is inevitable.

There are no exemptions in the directive for slaughtering operations. "Low-capacity" slaughterhouses processing up to 12 livestock units per week are subject to

less onerous rules on structure and layout of premises, although they must comply with the hygiene requirements. There are also provisions for the EC's Standing Veterinary Committee to approve the extension of the "low throughput" rules to slaughterhouses processing between 12 and 20 livestock units per week provided certain criteria are met. We anticipate that very few premises in Great Britain will meet the criteria laid down but any applications received will be considered on a case by case basis.

A separate directive (91/498/EEC) provides for additional time to be granted to businesses unable to meet all of the EC requirements on structure and layout of premises by 1 January 1993. A large number of operators have applied to take advantage of this provision for temporary derogations whilst they upgrade their premises.

Any applications from other member states for extending the "low throughput" rules must be authorised by the Standing Veterinary Committee so we shall be aware of them in due course. Commission inspectors will monitor applications of the directive in all member states. If there is any substantive evidence that any member state is not applying the rules correctly, the Government will raise the matter with the Commission.

Consumers Committees

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the numbers of consumers committees in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the number of *(a)* paid staff and *(b)* volunteers who work for them.

Mr. Soames: Full details of the United Kingdom's consumer committees are available in the HMSO publication "Public Bodies 1991" (ISBN 0-11-430064-X) including their membership and, where appropriate, their remuneration.

Food and Farming Festival

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contribution his Department made to the national festival for food and farming held in Hyde park in May; what was the cost of his Department's contribution; and what environmental matters were taken into account in preparing and establishing the contribution.

Mr. Curry: MAFF took part in the ASDA festival of food and farming as part of its overall exhibition programme for 1992-93, the cost of which is met from within the Department's paid publicity budget for the year. The various elements of the Hyde park exhibit were designed for this year's exhibitions programme as a whole which will take in other major venues. One section was devoted to environmental issues and was designed especially to encourage understanding of environmental matters.

BNFL

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to ensure that British Nuclear Fuels plc makes a full statement about the findings of recent monitoring of the coastline in west Cumbria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have sought and received assurance from British Nuclear Fuels plc that it will continue to release full information on this matter as it becomes available. The Government's own monitoring programme confirms there is no threat to the public.

Swine Influenza

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of recorded cases of pigs with swine influenza caused by virus strain type HI 195852 by region.

Mr. Soames: Although the Department is aware of a recent apparent increase in the incidence of respiratory disease in pigs, swine influenza is not a notifiable disease, so comprehensive data are not maintained.

DEFENCE

Interdisciplinary Research Centres

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has any plans *(a)* to renew its funding of the interdisciplinary research centre on semiconductor materials which ended in March and *(b)* to fund any other interdisciplinary research centres.

Mr. Aitken: The answers are *(a)* yes, and *(b)* no.

Research

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the 11 polytechnics and 43 universities referred to in his answers to the hon. Member for Brent, East on 20 January, *Official Report*, column *16* and to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 12 February 1985, *Official Report*, column *141* at which his Department has funded research in the last three years.

Mr. Aitken: I will place a list of the bodies concerned in the Library of the House.

Chemical and Biological Warfare

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the location of all facilities shared by Britain with any other countries in the field of chemical and biological warfare; and what is the nature of their work.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No facilities are shared with any nation for chemical and biological warfare or defence. The United Kingdom abandoned all offensive chemical and biological weapons in the late 1950s. Since then the United Kingdom has been wholly concerned with chemical and biological defence, ie the provision of effective protective measures for the United Kingdom armed forces.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are on the Chemical and Biological Defence Board of the Defence Scientific Advisory Council referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 11 December 1991, *Official Report*, column 476; how many on the Chemical and Biological Defence Board are from universities and polytechnics; and what are the occupations and backgrounds of the others on the board.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Chemical and Biological Defence Board comprises up to 22 members, including 12 independent members from industry, universities and institutions of higher education, and 10 official members from the civil service and the armed forces. The current strength is nine independent members—five from universities and four from the private sector—and 10 official members—six service officers, of whom four are medically qualified, plus four senior scientific civil servants from various Government Departments.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what year Britain stopped producing chemical and biological weapons; for what reasons this decision was taken; which committees within the Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet Office were involved in making the decision; and whether the papers are openly available to be seen in the Public Records Office.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Britain stopped producing biological weapons in 1943 and chemical weapons in 1945. Biological weapon production, which was very limited, ended when the required stockpile had been achieved. Production of chemical weapons ceased because there was a sufficient stockpile, including captured German stocks. The United Kingdom unilaterally abandoned all offensive chemical and biological weapons over 30 years ago in the late 1950s and since then our role has been to ensure that the United Kingdom armed forces are effectively protected against chemical and biological weapons. Relevant papers are not available in the Public Records Office.

The rest of the question could be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the names of the general defence agreements in which information in the field of chemical and biological defence is passed between Britain, the United States of America and other allies; and when each of these agreements was signed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are a number of agreements with NATO allies covering research, development, deployment and standardisation of chemical and biological defence equipment. The following international agreements include chemical and biological defence in their scope:

a. The United Kingdom-United States-Canada memorandum of understanding on chemical and biological (CB) defence which addresses research, development, production and procurement of chemical and biological defence equipment. This was signed in 1980 and has been an extremely effective means of ensuring close collaboration between the three countries.

b. NATO army armaments group (NAAG) panel VII on nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) defence and its sub-panels and working groups are the main NATO fora. CB defence is also discussed by other NATO panels and by the NATO defence research group.

c. The United Kingdom-United States-Canada-Australia American, British and Canadian Armies (ABCA) agreement between the Armies of the four countries. This includes a group known as the Quadrupartite Working Group (QWG) which has a panel on NBC defence.

d. The United Kingdom-United States-Canada-Australia air standardisation co-ordinating committee agreement which also has a sub-group addressing CB defence.

e. The United Kingdom-United States navies have an information exchange agreement which includes NBC defence in its scope.

f. The technical co-operation programme which involves the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand is concerned with collaboration in defence research and has a sub-group that is active on CB defence.

g. The Anglo-French defence research group allows the exchange of information and collaboration on research for CB defence.

h. The Anglo-Netherlands-Norwegian collaboration project exchange of information and collaboration on research for CB defence.

i. FINABEL, an army-army agreement covering CB defence information exchange between Britain, France, Italy, Netherlands, Germany, Spain and Belgium.

Suicides

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff in his Department's research and development establishments have committed suicide since 1985; and if he will list them according to the date and the establishment where each was working.

Mr. Aitken: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Genetic Engineering

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts and agreements currently exist between his Department and universities and other institutions of higher education for the research related to genetic engineering referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 30 June 1988, *Official Report*, column *313*.

Mr. Aitken: One, sponsored by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

Forces Welfare Funds

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to increase the level of British forces welfare funds.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The funding and resources made available for the wide variety of activities grouped together under the general term of "welfare" are kept under continual review.

Research Projects

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list of Ministry of Defence research projects in universities and polytechnics which are unclassified.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our practice to give details of individual research contracts.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many research projects in British universities and polytechnics have been funded since December 1985 through the United States strategic defence initiative programme; what has been the total value of these projects; and how many universities and polytechnics in Britain have received funding through the strategic defence initiative programme since December 1985;

(2) how many research projects in British universities and polytechnics are currently being funded under the United States strategic defence initiative programme; what is the total value of these projects; and how many British universities and polytechnics are currently receiving funding for research from the strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Aitken: Since the signing of the memorandum of understanding on SDI between the United States and the United Kingdom, we understand that some 41 such contracts worth over $10·7 million in total have been awarded by the United States, benefiting 23 United Kingdom academic institutions. Nineteen of these contracts are still current, valued at approximately $6·4 million. Thirteen universities and polytechnics are involved in this current research work.

Porton Down

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many scientific papers the staff of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down have published in open scientific journals and literature in each year since 1985.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment (CBDE) under its framework document. Therefore, I have asked the chief executive of CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Monoclonal Antibodies

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts and agreements currently exist between his Department and universities and other institutions of higher education for research related to the production or application of monoclonal antibodies, referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 30 June 1988, *Official Report*, column *314*.

Mr. Aitken: Two, sponsored by the Defence Research Agency.

Careers Liaison Officers

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff from the Atomic Weapons Establishment have been appointed careers liaison officers to universities or polytechnics in the last three years; and which universities or polytechnics have been involved.

Mr. Aitken: The MOD nominates suitable members of staff to act as recruitment liaison officers with universities and polytechnics on its behalf. Over the last three years nine staff serving at AWE have been so nominated.

Private Anthony Evans

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the investigation into the case of Private Anthony Evans lately of the Royal Regiment of Wales.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Ex-Private Evan's allegations of racial abuse by members of his battalion have been investigated by the special investigations branch of the Royal Military Police and subsequently by a board of inquiry.

The findings of the board of inquiry will next be considered by the Army Board.

Playgroups

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current annual grant to pre-school playgroups for children of service families.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no direct MOD grant to individual pre-school playgroups for children of service families. The Ministry of Defence does fund a number of posts within the Pre-School Playgroups Association to provide co-ordination of the support to the PPA network of fieldworkers in British Forces Germany, and general support and guidance to playgroups in other overseas commands. This co-ordination ensures appropriate training and development of fieldworkers to promote good practice in pre-school playgroups in service locations. The grant made available to the PPA in the current financial year is £116,000.

Submarines

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects tenders to be invited for the ordering of batch 2 Trafalgar class submarines.

Mr. Aitken: Studies into the design of a batch 2 Trafalgar class are in progress. Subject to the outcome, we expect to invite tenders for design and build of the first submarine during the course of next year.

Collaborative Projects

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the collaborative projects on military equipment currently being undertaken by the United Kingdom and other countries in the Western European Union.

Mr. Aitken: The following is a list of collaborative projects currently being undertaken by the United Kingdom and at least one other country which is a member of the Western European Union:

Collaborative project	*Country(s)*
IN PRODUCTION OR SERVICE	
Naval equipment	*Other participants*
NATO Ships Inertial Navigation System	Canada, Netherlands, Spain
Land equipment	
FH70 Howitzer	Germany, Italy
M483Al Artillery Shell	Netherlands, Turkey, United States
Scorpion Reconnaissance Vehicle	Belgium
Multiple-Launch Rocket System Phase I	France, Germany, Italy, United States
Multiple-Launch Rocket System Phase II	Germany
Missiles	
Martel Air-to-Surface	France
Sidewinder Air-to-Air	Germany, Italy, Norway
Milan Anti-Tank (including improvements)	France, Germany
Air Systems	
Jaguar	France
Lynx	France
Puma	France
Gazelle	France
Tornado	Germany, Italy
Other Equipment	*Other Participants*
Navstar Global Positioning System (GPS)	Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, United States

Collaborative project	*Country(s)*
IN DEVELOPMENT OR EARLIER STUDY PHASES	
Naval equipment	*Other participants*
The Future Frigate	France
NATO Improved Link Eleven	Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, United States
Land equipment	
COBRA (Counter Battery Radar)	France, Germany
Multiple-Launch Rocket System Phase III	France, Germany, United States
Aimed Control Effect Anti-Tank Mine	France, Germany
Future Tank Main Armament	France, Germany, United States
Missiles	
TRIGAT (Third Generation Anti-Tank Guided Weapon)	Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands
Family of Anti-Air Missile Systems	France, Italy
Air Systems	
Airborne Radar Demonstrator System	France, United States
European Fighter Aircraft	Germany, Italy, Spain
EH101 Helicopter	Italy
RTM322 Helicopter Engine	France
	Other Participants
Allied Standard Avionics Architecture Initiative	France, Germany, United States
Other equipment	
NIS Question and Answer Component Development	France, Germany, Italy, United States
ADA Computer Language Project Support Environment	Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, United States
Allied Data Systems Interoperability Agency NATO Procedural Interoperability Standards	France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, United States

Army Cadet Force

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Army Cadet Force units are operating in Scotland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: 216.

Naval Craft

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which *(a)* Leander class frigates and *(b)* Ton class minehunters are currently in service in the Royal Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Navy currently has six Leander class frigates, Andromeda, Argonaut, Hermione, Juno, Scylla and Sirius, and six ton class minehunters, Brinton, Iveston, Kellington, Nurton, Sheraton and Wilton.

Ministerial Visit, Washington

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on *(a)* matters discussed and *(b)* decisions taken, during his meeting with his United States counterpart on his recent visit to Washington.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence discussed a wide variety of issues of mutual interest with Mr. Cheney during his visit to Washington.

UNCED

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what particular contributions his Department has made to the United Kingdom submissions to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June; and what has been the cost of his Department's input.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In common with other Government Departments, the Ministry of Defence has been consulted on preparatory work for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development but has not been required to make any particular contributions.

Arms Fairs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the arms and military equipment fairs in which his Department has participated since 1 April 1991; what has been the cost of participation in each respective fair; and what financial or logistical support has been given by his Department to United Kingdom arms and military equipment manufacturers to attend these fairs.

Mr. Aitken: In the period from 1 April 1991, the Defence Export Services Organisation exhibited at the following arms and military equipment exhibitions:

Exhibition	*Extra cost to MOD* £
DCEE Birmingham	10,000
Paris Airshow	200,000
Dubai International	18,000
LIMA, Malaysia	7,000
Defence Seoul	6,000
AIDEX, Canberra	18,000
Asian Aerospace, Singapore	8,000
Defence Services Asia, Malaysia	6,000

In addition the Royal Navy equipment exhibition was held in September 1991. All extra costs incurred in this exhibition were recovered from participating companies.

No financial or logistical support was given by MOD to United Kingdom arms and military equipment manufacturers to enable them to attend these exhibitions.

REME Workshops, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to reply to the letter of 29 April from the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby, respecting the future of No. 42 command workshops, REME in West Derby, Liverpool.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I wrote to the hon. Member on 20 May 1992.

Woolwich Arsenal

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the listed buildings, and their grading, on the Woolwich arsenal site, with the estimated costs of refurbishment.

Mr. Aitken: The listed buildings at the Royal Arsenal site together with the gradings are as follows:

	Gradings
1. The Brass Foundry (in DOE ownership)	I
2. Verbruggens House	II
3. The Main Guard House	II
4. Dial Arch Block	II
5. Riverside Guard Rooms (2 No.)	II
6. Royal Laboratory Pavilions	II
7. Old Military Academy	*II
8. Officers Block	II
9. Grand Store complex (4 No.)	II
10. Shell Foundry Gatehouse	II
11. Middle Gate House (part only)	II
12. Royal Carriage Factory	II
13. Armstrong Gun Factory	II
14. New Laboratory Square	II

Preliminary estimates of the cost of refurbishing those buildings in MOD ownership to a reasonable standard is likely to be in the order of £12 million.

Army Air Corps

Mr. Home Roberston: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent to date on works at Dishforth to accommodate the Army Air Corps; what plans he has for Army Air Corps deployment at Dishforth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To date, some £39 million has been spent on works to accommodate the Army Air Corps at Dishforth.

Under the plans for restructuring the Army announced in "Britain's Army for the 90s" (Cm 1595) an Army Air Corps Regiment will continue to be based at Dishforth.

Household Division

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the review of the performance of public ceremonial duties in London by the Household Division.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Public duties are not exempt from the reduction in the size of the Army, and we will seek to reduce the manpower bill for such duties wherever it is sensible and practical to do so. There is no question of putting security or major ceremonial occasions at risk.

Ark Royal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the bombing of the Ark Royal aircraft carrier by a Royal Navy Sea Harrier during a training exercise on 20 April; what will be the cost of repair to the ship; and what steps have been taken to avoid a repeat of such an accident.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During a routine training exercise on 20 April a small practice bomb, released by a Sea Harrier aircraft, struck and penetrated the flight deck of HMS Ark Royal. The exercise involved the practice bombing of a surface target which was being towed some 500 yards astern of Ark Royal.

There were six casualties who suffered injuries, mainly burns; damage to the ship was minor. Immediate repairs were carried out allowing the ship to proceed with its task; further repairs are being undertaken during the ship's current stay in Portsmouth. The cost of these repairs is around £60,000.

A board of inquiry was convened and its final report is awaited. The board of inquiry will make recommendations on any action which it considers necessary; in the interim, as a prudent precaution, all Royal Navy Sea Harrier practice bomb attacks against towed targets have been suspended.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 22 May 1992.

TRANSPORT

Twyford Down

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he has any plans to visit Twyford down, Hampshire;

(2) what visits the Minister for Roads and Traffic has paid to Twyford down, Hampshire since 9 April; and whether he will make a statement;

(3) whether he has any plans to meet representatives of the Twyford down, Association to discuss the M3 Bar End-Compton.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I visited the Winchester area on 5 May to see the route of the Bar End Compton section of the M3. My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit the area or to meet representatives of the Twyford Down Association.

M3

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list the meetings which have taken place between officials of the United Kingdom Government and the European Commission to discuss the M3 Bar End-Compton during May 1992; and whether he will make a statement on the outcome.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Discussions between officials of the United Kingdom Government and the European Commission were held on 7 May for the purpose of clarifying the issues raised in the Commission's article 169 letter of 17 October 1991 and the United Kingdom Government's reply of 17 December 1991. As the Commission is still considering this response I cannot comment further at the present.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what communications have been received by Her Majesty's Government from the European Commission, since 9 April, regarding the M3 Bar End-Compton; and whether he will place copies in the Library.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None.

Toxic Paints (Vessels)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations his Department has made to the International Maritime Organisation to encourage the phasing out of the use of toxic paints on vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The United Kingdom gave full support to the action taken by the International Maritime Organisation, in IMO resolution MEPC 46(30) dated 16 November 1990, to restrict the use of toxic antifouling paints and encourage the development of environmentally safe substitutes.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce whether the proposed channel tunnel rail link will be optimised for passengers and freight or passengers only; and whether it will be two or four track.

Mr. Freeman: I refer to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) yesterday at column *199*.

M1-M62 Link

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 18 May, *Official Report*, columns *35-36*, if he will list the scales of each plan, map and diagram made available at the public exhibitions relating to the proposed M1-M62 motorways link; and if he will place a copy of each in the Library.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Plans, maps and diagrams were made available at the following scales: 1:100,000, 1:50,000, 1:17,500, 1:10,000 and 1:2,500.

The single existing copy of the exhibition material and supporting plans is too bulky to be placed in the Library. The hon. Member may inspect these documents at our offices in Leeds.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid and Advice

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement about the current level of legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Information on the level of legal aid provided in the financial year 1991-92 is to be published in the legal aid annual report which will be laid before Parliament on 22 June. A copy will be placed in the Library of both Houses.

Children Act

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many emergency protection orders were taken out during the first six months of the operation of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information available indicates that 800 emergency protection orders were made by courts in England and Wales in the period 14 October 1991 to 31 March 1992, following the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many place of safety orders were taken out during the first six months immediately prior to the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not available in the form requested. Between 1 January and 30 June 1991, which is the most recent information available, some 1,980 places of safety orders were made in England and Wales.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many child assessment orders were taken out during the first six months of the operation of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information available indicates that 22 child assessment orders were made by courts in England and Wales in the period 14 October 1991 to 31 March 1992, following the implementation of the Children Act 1989 on 14 October 1991.

EDUCATION

Law College Courses

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has to cover law college one-year post-graduate courses under the mandatory award notice for local educational authority financial grant support.

Mr. Forman: The Education Act 1962 restricts local education authorities to making mandatory awards in respect of attendance only on certain designated full-time courses up to first degree level and on designated initial teacher training courses. The Act permits authorities to make discretionary awards for other courses, subject to certain exclusions. Where postgraduate law courses are eligible for discretionary awards, the decision whether or not to make such an award is a matter for the authority. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Undergraduates

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of full-time undergraduate students fail to complete their courses, by institution, for each of the United Kingdom's universities and polytechnics.

Mr. Forman: Details of non-completion of higher education courses can be found in:

(a) University Management Statistics and Performance Indicators in the UK, published by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Universities Funding Council, and

(b) DFE Statistical Bulletin "Leaving rates among First Year Students in English Polytechnics and Colleges", to be published in June.

Publication *(a)* is in the Library; publication *(b)* will be placed in the Library and a copy sent to the hon. Member.

School Transport

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will introduce provisions to ensure formal checks on the suitability of drivers and escorts involved in transporting children to and from school.

Mr. Forth: Local authorities already have the power to carry out police checks on drivers and escorts where they consider them necessary. The Department, in conjunction with the Department of Health and the Home Office, issued guidance on the circumstances in which police checks should be undertaken in its circular 12/88. A copy is in the Library.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Debt

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what payments were received by the United Kingdom Government and United Kingdom Government agencies on official bilateral debt, from the countries defined by the World Bank as severely indebted low income countries in 1990 and 1991; and what payments are estimated to be made by those countries in 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Figures for official bilateral debt repayments to the ODA, Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) and ECGD are given in the tables.

It is important to consider these figures in context. Significant outflows of aid to the severely indebted low income countries (SILICs) continue to overshadow debt repayments made to the ODA. The net transfer of finance from CDC to the SILICs is also positive over the period in question.

The figure given below for payments to ECGD in 1992 may well, of course, be higher than the amount actually paid. In particular, no attempt has been made to estimate the impact of future Paris Club agreements on Trinidad terms. Agreement to begin implementing the Prime Minister's Trinidad terms initiative to relieve the burden of debt on the poorest countries was achieved in December. Five countries have already benefited from the terms, and we expect more to do so, including some of those defined as SILICs, over the coming months. As these new agreements take effect, we can expect a significant reduction in repayments due to ECGD.

(a) Loan repayments from SILICs to the ODA (£)

Received 1990-91	*Received 1991-92*	*Expected 1992-93*
3,067,664	3,067,664	785,530

Figures for payments received by and due to the ODA are recorded on a financial year basis.

(b) Loan repayments from SILICs to the CDC (£)

Received 1990	*Received 1991*	*Expected 1992*
33,902,000	28,071,000	33,138,235

Figures show the CDC's total receipts from the SILICs, whether from the private or public sector.

(b) Repayments from SILICs to the ECGD (£)

Received 1990	*Received 1991*	*Due 1992*
251,000,000	275,000,000	509,000,000

Figures shown for 1990 and 1991 are in respect of officially guaranteed debt rescheduled through the Paris club. The figure for 1992 shows payments due on the same rescheduled debt, not including arrears which were outstanding as of 31 December 1991.

Notes:

Those countries currently defined as severely indebted low income countries (SILICs) by the World Bank are Burundi, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire and Zambia.

Joint Funding Scheme

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will be completing his review of the joint funding scheme, including the block grant element; and if he will make a statement on the completion of his review.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have recently completed our review of ODA co-operation with non-governmental organisations including the joint funding scheme. We have subsequently reviewed the block grant element in the scheme. These reviews have justified our continuing confidence in the contribution made by British voluntary organisations to developing countries. As a result, my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has increased our support for the joint funding scheme from £23 million in 1991-92 to £28 million in 1992-93.

ENVIRONMENT

Marsham Street Premises

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what survey has been taken, or appreciation made, of changes in travel-to-work patterns for Government employees currently located in Marsham street, Westminster, that would occur consequent on their transfer to specific sites in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone.

Mr. Howard: A sample survey to compare staff travelling time to alternative locations in London was carried out last year. A full survey of the present travelling arrangements of all staff currently in London is now being launched.

Council House Sales

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to allow local authorities to spend capital receipts raised from council house sales.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on 13 May at column *608*.

Cardigan Bay (Earthquake Simulation)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council concerning the recommendations of *(a)* the British geological survey and *(b)* the sea mammal research unit in relation to the simulated earthquake explosion proposed for Cardigan bay; and if he will place a copy of their relevant reports and recommendations in the Library.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has communicated with the Welsh Office, the British geological survey and the sea mammal research unit on proposed seismic testing on the sea bed in Cardigan bay. I understand that the Cardigan bay research has now been postponed.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had concerning the proposed simulated earthquake experimental explosion in Cardigan bay and its potential impact on the sonar neurology of dolphins, porpoises and seals.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has received a representation from Greenpeace concerning proposed seismic testing on the sea bed in Cardigan bay. I understand that the Cardigan bay research has now been postponed.

Recycling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the use of economic instruments to encourage recycling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 19 May, *Official Report*, col. *73*.

Radioactive Pollution (Baltic Sea)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what technical and ecological assistance the United Kingdom has offered to Russia to assist in the clean-up of radioactive pollution in the Baltic sea.

Mr. Maclean: No request for such assistance has been received.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the total value of the local government revenue support grant paid by his Department is attributable to allocations made for expenditure on services for which other Departments of State have primary responsibility.

Mr. Squire: The amount of revenue support grant paid to each receiving authority makes up the difference between the standard spending assessment for the area and the income the authority would receive from the community charge for standard spending plus redistributed non-domestic rates.

Total standard spending assessments for 1992-93, service by service, are as follows:

	£ million	*Percentage*
Education	18,352·7	48·3
Personal social services	4,734·6	12·5
Police	2,671·4	7·0
Fire and civil defence	1,105·2	2·9
Highways maintenance	1,806·0	4·8
All other services	6,834·9	18·0
Capital financing	2,487·9	6·5
	37,992·7	100·0

Services provided by my Department are covered by the all other services and capital financing blocks but cannot be identified separately within them.

Revenue support grant is not hypothecated to expenditure on particular services.

River Thames

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are made by his Department for regular monitoring of the quality and cleanliness of the water in the River Thames; and what

evidence he has of a deterioration of water quality and an increase in sludge deposits on the river bed at Greenwich over recent months.

Mr. Maclean: The National Rivers Authority is responsible for monitoring water quality; the results are available on public registers maintained in the NRA's regional offices. I understand that regular monitoring of the River Thames shows no evidence of changes in water quality other than those expected during a normal seasonal cycle, or of problems arising from sludge deposits at Greenwich.

ReChem Discharges

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions, between January 1990 and April 1992 discharges into Southampton Water from ReChem (Fawley) have exceeded limits set by the National Rivers Authority; and if he will provide details.

Mr. Maclean: The results of sampling carried out by the National Rivers Authority, together with details of any consequent action taken, are available on public registers maintained in the NRA's regional offices.

Bleak House

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the inspector's report on the application by British Coal Opencast to develop the site at Bleak house.

Mr. Baldry: The inspector's report has been fully considered, and a decision will be issued as soon as possible. The report will be published at the same time.

Opencast Mining

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review mineral planning guidance notes relating to opencast coal mining operations by incorporating in them a presumption in favour of the protection of the environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The current guidelines are contained in Minerals Planning Guidance Note 3 (MPG 3) published in 1988. As part of a monitoring exercise on the effectiveness of the guidelines, my Department has recently completed a wide ranging consultation exercise on their practical operation. I shall consider whether there is any need for revision of MPG 3 in the light of that.

London Docklands

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the total cost of land purchases and land reclamation on sites in London docklands which have been sold on to private developers.

Mr. Redwood: Information in the form requested is only available at disproportionate cost. However, up to 31 March 1992, the London Docklands Development Corporation spent £161 million on land acquisition and £118 million on reclamation. Its policy is to sell such land to the private sector for development.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total amount of public money spent by the London Docklands development corporation to date.

Mr. Redwood *[Holding answer 21 May 1992]:* To the end of 1991-92, the London Docklands development corporation had received £1,348 million in grant aid. The corporation has also been able to utilise receipts of some £300 million.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total value of business rates forgone in the London Docklands enterprise zone;

(2) what is the total of business rates forgone in the Canary Wharf development.

Mr. Redwood *[Holding answer 21 May 1992]:* Up to 31 March 1990, rate revenue forgone in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone amounted to £37,593,000. Information is not held centrally on rate revenue forgone for individual developments.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the price charged to the developers for the land on which Canary Wharf is being built.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* The London Docklands Development Corporation sold the Canary Wharf site to Olympia and York for £20·2 million.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the financial benefits derived by Olympia and York by virtue of their presence in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone from investment allowance, business rate exemption or other advantages.

Mr. Squire *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* This information is not available.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table indicating for each year since 1981, at current prices, the amount of money provided in tax allowances in the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total amount of capital allowances claimed by companies in the London Docklands enterprise zone.

(2) what is the total of capital allowances *(a)* claimed and *(b)* claimable for the Canary Wharf development.

Mr. Redwood: The total cost of capital allowances for all enterprise zones in Britain, estimated at 31 March 1990, was £660 million in 1989-90 prices. No information on the cost of capital allowances is available for individual enterprise zones or developments within them.

Recyclable Paper

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the British Paper and Board Industry Federation concerning methods of discouraging the disposal of recyclable paper in landfill sites; and what response he has made.

Mr. Maclean: My colleagues have received letters from the chairman of the federation's waste paper committee which set out their concerns. I will place in the Library a copy of the reply from my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

Local Authority Services

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the services provided and *(b)* the statutory responsibilities of each type of local authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is for individual local authorities to decide how to meet their statutory requirements. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to issue a descriptive list of functions conferred on local authorities by public general Acts to the Local Government Commission for its information once it has been set up. (There are also many local Acts conferring powers on local government which it would not be practicable to list.) A copy of the list will be placed in the Library of both Houses.

Interim Development Order Permissions

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many interim development order permissions have been registered in the Rossendale and Darwen constituency in the last 12 months.

Mr. Baldry: None. In the six months allowed under the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 for persons to apply to register interim development order planning permissions with their local mineral planning authority Lancashire county council received 23 applications; five of these were within Rossendale and one within Blackburn. Further information is available from Lancashire county council.

Fish Farming

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will seek to bring marine fish farming within the direct control of elected planning authorities, as recommended by the Select Committee on the Environment in its report on coastal zone planning.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are considering the recommendations of the recent Environment Select Committee Report on Coastal Zone Protection and Planning, including its recommendations on marine fishfarming. It will issue a full response in due course.

Wild Birds

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in persuading European Community partners to introduce special safeguards on the transport of live wild birds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The then Secretary of State wrote to Commissioner Carlo Ripa di Meana on 18 February urging him to press the European Commission to expedite the proposed further measures for regulating the wild bird trade which are provided for in the EC Directive on the Welfare of Live Animals During Transport. We have not yet received a response from the Commissioner, but will keep up the pressure for early progress.

In the meantime, we are taking a number of other measures to improve transport conditions for live birds. We are pursuing with the International Air Transport Association the possibility of limiting the size of live bird shipments, and are introducing a live animals checklist for all commercial shipments of live birds entering the United Kingdom. We remain very concerned about this issue and under the auspices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), we will continue to play a leading part in the adoption off international measures to provide for the suspension trade in species suffering unacceptably high mortality.

Rent-to-Mortgage Scheme

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that former local authority tenants whose homes have been sold to housing associations will be able to participate in the rent-to-mortgage scheme.

Sir George Young: When housing subject on secure tenancies is transferred to private landlords, tenants have their right to buy preserved. In addition we propose to consult on the extension to them of the proposed statutory rents to mortgages scheme.

Empty Council Properties

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of empty council properties in Manchester on 1 May, divided into *(a)* management voids, *(b)* capital voids and *(c)* city challenge voids.

Mr. Baldry: The latest available information held centrally on empty council dwellings relates to 1 April 1991 and was provided by Manchester city council in its April 1991 housing investment programme return (HIP1), a copy of which is in the Library. This shows the number of vacant dwellings owned by the council broken down by cause of vacancy.

Marine Consultation Areas

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he has received to his Department's consultation paper on marine consultation areas; and if he will indicate the number of responses which showed support for the concept.

Mr. Maclean: So far the Department and the Welsh Office have received some 146 responses to the consultation paper. It has not yet been possible to complete a detailed analysis.

Earth Summit

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department intends to issue any publications related to the Earth summit before the conference begins in Rio de Janeiro.

Mr. Howard: Britain has a proud history of contributing technology and expertise to assist developing countries. We have actively promoted the importance of technology co-operation to support sustainable development, both in the debates associated with preparations for the Earth summit in Rio and elsewhere. Continuing this process, my Department commissioned jointly with the Department of Trade and Industry a booklet based on case studies to illustrate the active part Britain already

plays in technology co-operation and to provide insights into the range of mechanisms and processes that contribute to its success.

I am pleased to announce that this booklet, entitled "Technology Co-operation: Britain's Experience", is published today, in time to be circulated widely amongst delegates at the Earth Summit in June. It will also be made available around the world through British embassies and high commissions.

It illustrates the admirable activities of many British companies. It rightly emphasises the vital role that skill and know-how have in the transfer of technology and the crucial importance of normal commercial mechanisms. Other countries have much to learn from the positive approach of British business.

I have arranged for copies of the booklet to be made available to the Libraries of each House.

Property Services Agency

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to offer Property Services Agency projects for sale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I am pleased to announce that the Government are now ready to offer PSA Projects for sale, by competitive tender.

The sale will be advertised widely here and in Europe. Next week copies of the sale memorandum will be available on request to those interested in buying PSA Projects from my advisers, Coopers and Lybrand. While I would prefer to sell projects as a single entity, it is open to prospective purchasers to indicate their interest in part purchases. Preliminary bids need to be submitted by 26 June. Shortlisted bidders will then be provided with more detailed information and be expected to make final offers approximately 4 weeks later.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his latest estimated dates for winding-up each urban development corporation; what arrangements have been made for the disposal of assets and transfer of powers once each urban development corporation has ceased to exist; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 20 May 1992]:* The wind-up dates of the urban development corporations will be considered in the context of the annual corporate planning round which is currently under way. Arrangements for the disposal of assets and the transfer of powers are under review.

Atmospheric Pollution

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about atmospheric pollution in the east Thames corridor.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations expressing concern about the possible cumulative environmental effects of various proposals to build power stations and incinerators in the east Thames corridor.

WALES

Energy Conservation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what role his Department now has in promoting energy conservation and efficiency in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department (Welsh Office) will continue to promote energy efficiency in all sectors of the economy. This is outlined in the "Energy Plan for Wales for the 1990s" (copy attached), which I launched in December last year.

The energy used in Wales, when transport is included, currently costs some 2 billion per year. It is thus one of the biggest elements in the economy and we have to use all forms of energy more efficiently—this is not only to save money; to improve competitiveness and to conserve finite resources but also to help the environment by helping to reduce the "greenhouse effect". It is estimated that savings in excess of 20 per cent. per year are not only possible but realistically achievable using well known techniques and this in turn will help to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide by over 2 million tonnes per annum.

Promotion of the more efficient use of energy is achieved by the Energy Efficiency Office (EEO) advising local industry, commerce and local authorities and through involvement with the local energy mangagement groups. The EEO will also disseminate literature, visit and advise companies, suggest sources of expert advice and will assist in organising seminars.

Following the general election, the policy lead in Government for energy efficiency now resides with the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Energy Efficiency Office is now part of the environment protection group.

I have every confidence that action arising from this reorganisation will play an important part in promoting the more effective use of energy and thereby reducing costs and at the same time helping the environment.

Rechar

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review the working of the Rechar scheme in Wales; and if he will make it his policy to help local authorities who are currently without the necessary credit approvals to enable them to benefit from Rechar, to overcome this obstacle.

Mr. David Hunt: Commissioner Millan approved the South Wales Rechar programme on 26 February 1992 and administrative arrangements for the implementation of the programme in Wales are currently being put into place. The Government have announced new arrangements for ensuring that the additionality of European regional development fund (ERDF) grants is fully transparent. I shall be providing full additional expenditure cover to the relevant spending authorities for the ERDF grant element of Rechar schemes.

School Buses

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidance to *(a)* county council education departments and *(b)* head teachers of grant-maintained schools with relation to *(a)* the maximum safe emissions from diesel-engined school buses, *(b)* the minimum

maintenance standards of starter motors for diesel-engined school buses and *(c)* maximum periods for allowing diesel-engined school buses to stand with engines idling on school premises.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. These are matters for education authorities and the governors of schools, grant maintained or otherwise, to consider in the light of their policies for health and safety and vehicle maintenance.

The Secretary of State for Transport has powers to regulate emissions from motor vehicles and I would refer the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend's Department.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: Figures for expenditure by the Department's information division, including staff and press cutting service but excluding the cost of purchasing media advertising and promotional material, cannot readily be disaggregated for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88.

Figures for the succeeding years are:

	£
1988-89	469,000
1989-90	487,000
1990-91	481,000
1991-92	481,000

Expenditure for 1992-93 is likely to be about £540,000.

Consultants Fees

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Mobile Shops

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what government assistance is available towards the establishment and running of mobile shops in remote areas of rural Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: There are no schemes of Government assistance specifically directed towards the establishment and running of mobile shops in rural Wales.

However, such projects may be eligible under general schemes of assistance to business operated by the Welsh Development Agency, the Development Board for Rural Wales and others.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. David Hunt: The information given as follows relates to surveys which contain at least one opinion seeking question and includes surveys notified to the Department by non-departmental public bodies in Wales:

1993 Visitor Survey of the National Parks of England and Wales (1992 Pilot) (CCW)
Expanding the Role of Women in North/Rural Wales Workforce—Survey of Women (WDA)
Business and Community Perceptions of the DBRW within its area (DBRW)
A470 Corridor Public Transport Study
Modified Consultation Procedure for A5 Halfway Bridge Improvement
A487 Penygroes/Llanllyfni Bypass and Y Groeslon Diversion

Note: CCW—Countryside Council for Wales
DBRW—Development Board for Rural Wales
WDA—Welsh Development Agency

School Playing Fields

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which housing associations in Wales have built houses on land previously comprising school playing fields; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the amount of money raised by the sale of school playing fields or parts of school playing fields in each of the counties of Wales in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not held centrally.

Disabled Facility Grants

Dr. Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on changes in his Department's instructions to local authorities on the method of funding disabled facility grants.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: For 1992-93 £26·3 million has been provided for mandatory disabled facilities and other discretionary grants, on top of the normal housing programme for local authorities. This is to enable authorities to play their full part in providing packages of support best suited to meet the individual needs of disabled people in close liaison with social services departments, and others.

INMOS Ltd.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he plans to take to secure the continuation of the fabrication in Newport, Gwent, of the transputer and other products of INMOS Ltd.

Mr. David Hunt: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Gentleman on 11 May last.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the total work force in his Department are registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department is fully committed to an equal opportunities policy which states that no job applicant or employee should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of disablement. I have placed a copy of my Department's "Guide to Equal Opportunities" in the Library of the House.

At 1 April 1992, 1·7 per cent. of the staff in my Department have chosen to register as disabled. My Department also employs several unregistered disabled people.

The initiatives my Department has taken include the appointment of a departmental disabled persons officer; close liaison with the Department of Employment, disablement advisory services and disablement resettlement officers particularly on recruitment of disabled staff; the establishment of a work experience scheme for clients of the Cardiff employment rehabilitation centre; and the provision of special aids and equipment to disabled officers to enable them to carry out their duties effectively.

A further programme of action to achieve equality of opportunity in the Welsh Office for disabled people is to be issued to staff shortly. This will contain details of current practice and areas for future development with measurable objectives and target dates for their achievement.

RAF Brawdy and RNAD Trecwn

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times the task force on the effects of the closures of RAF Brawdy and RNAD Trecwn has met.

Mr. David Hunt: The full west Wales task force has met seven times. In addition a number of meetings of various task force sub-groups have been convened to consider specific issues.

Heritage Issues

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his Department's role in heritage issues in the light of the creation of the Department of National Heritage.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department will liaise closely with the Department of National Heritage on all heritage issues for which my right hon. Friend is responsible.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the 1993-94 financial settlement for local authorities in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have decided to delay the announcement of the Government's proposals for total standard spending and aggregate external finance until the autumn, because of the particular circumstances of the 1993-94 settlement.

In arriving at proposals I need to take into account the implications for the level of council tax. These will rest in part on the valuation of properties. This will not be completed in time for a July announcement.

I am also concerned that the most up-to-date and accurate information is available to determine the financing of local authorities' new responsibilities for community care.

In the circumstances, I concluded that local government in Wales would be better served by an autumn settlement.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Sherry

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy relating to European Community legislation with regard to duty on *(a)* British sherry, *(b)* Cyprus sherry and *(c)* Spanish sherry.

Sir John Cope: The Government's objective in the European Community negotiations is to achieve an agreement which allows existing United Kingdom duty arrangements for these products to continue. The Presidency proposals discussed at the 19 May ECOFIN would allow for this.

European Monetary Institute

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will describe the British representation at the European Monetary Institute.

Mr. Nelson: According to its statute the European Monetary Institute (EMI) will be directed and managed by the Council of the EMI. The Council will consist of the President of the EMI and the governor of each member state's national central bank. The United Kingdom member of the Council will therefore be the Governor of the Bank of England.

Property Charges

Mr. Speed: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when his Department first raised the matter of VAT and domestic service charges paid by freeholders on their property with the European Commission for an option; and when he expects a substantive reply.

Sir John Cope: The Office of the United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the European Community (UKREP) first wrote to the Commission on 23 April 1991. An interim reply was received from the Commission on 27 June 1991 and UKREP wrote again on 23 September. Customs are asking UKREP to remind the Commission that a substantive reply is still outstanding.

Coastal Resources

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will review the role of the Crown Estate Commissioners relating to the management of coastal resources, as recommended by the Environment Committee in its report on coastal zone planning.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government are considering the recommendations of the Environment Committee's report, and a response to the Committee's report will be issued in due course.

Finance Bill

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make available to hon. Members the customary notes on the Finance Bill's clauses.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes. Notes on clauses are being placed in the Vote Office and in the Library of the House today.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the cost to public funds of *(a)* the closure of BCCI and *(b)* the Bingham inquiry.

Mr. Nelson: It is estimated that the total cost incurred by Lord Justice Bingham and his inquiry team will amount to £500,000. This cost will be shared by the Treasury and the Bank of England. The cost to public funds of closing BCCI is included in the administrative and legal costs of the Government Departments concerned and of the Bank of England. To provide an accurate estimate of these costs would involve disproportionate cost.

Earth Summit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals for debt collection for the world's least developed countries will be put forward by the United Kingdom delegation to the United Nations conference on environment and development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* The United Kingdom Government have consistently taken the lead in advocating debt cancellation for the poorest and most heavily indebted countries. At the UNCED conference the United Kingdom Government will urge all creditor countries to participate in the implementation of Trinidad terms, under which 50 per cent. of these countries' eligible debt can be cancelled, and will call for further improvemetns to the terms along the lines originally proposed by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer in Trinidad in September 1990.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meetings of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Economic and Finance Council of the European Community met in Brussels on 16 March during the Recess and again in Brussels on 19 May. Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors also met informally on 8-10 May in Oporto. The United Kingdom was represented by the then Minister of State (on 16 March), the Governor of the Bank of England and me (on 8-10 May) and the Paymaster General and me (on 19 May).

On 16 March the Council discussed aid to the former Soviet Union stressing the primary role of the Bretton Woods institutions but also the need for an early disbursement of the Community's loans. Possible procedures for extending external lending by the EIB were also discussed but without agreement.

President Delors made a statement on the Commission's proposals for the future financing of the Community which were briefly debated. The Council also adopted a recommendation on the Discharge of the 1990 Budget following statements on the Court of Auditors Report from Mr. Angioi, President of the Court, and Commissioner Schmidhuber. The United Kingdom's call for prior appraisal, better evaluation, and improvements in the economy and cost effectiveness of Community spending was well supported.

The Presidency's latest compromise texts on the Large Exposures and Capital Adequacy Directives were also discussed and remitted to officials for further work.

In discussion of various directives relating to excise duties and structures after the abolition of fiscal frontiers, a directive relating to the structure of excise duties on tobacco was agreed in principle and some progress was made towards agreements on the structures of duties on mineral oils. The Presidency also announced their intention to continue work at official level on directives concerning the abolition of withholding tax on interest and royalties and the treatment of offsetting losses. Finally, Commissioner Scrivener urged support for a Commission proposal for reducing excise duties on fuels made from agricultural products (so called biofuels).

In Oporto from 8-10 May ECOFIN Ministers met informally with their Central Bank Governors. There was a discussion of how the Community might promote non-inflationary growth which focused on the need to tackle structural rigidities especially in the markets for labour, capital and non-traded goods. In this context I reminded colleagues that the Working Time Directive was a retrograde step which would increase labour market rigidities rather than reducing them. It was agreed that structural issues should have a higher profile in multilateral surveillance discussions.

Aid to the former Soviet Union was also discussed and the predominant role of the Bretton Woods Institutions was reaffirmed. It was agreed that the Community's main role was in emergency and technical assistance rather than balance of payments support.

It was agreed that the Governors' Committee should pursue its work on the means for closer association between non-EC countries and the EMS. The Governors also reported on their technical work on EMU and I urged that they should keep ECOFIN closely in touch.

We agreed in principle to extend EIB lending to viable projects in further countries with which the Community has trade and co-operation agreements subject to annual ceilings and secondary EC Budget guarantees.

We also briefly discussed a Presidency paper on the need to improve EC budgetary discipline and transparency and many of my colleagues supported a move to enhance the role of ECOFIN in discussions of future financing more generally.

On 19 May, the Council discussed the economic situation in Germany and Italy as part of our regular examinations of national economic convergence programmes. The Council concluded that Germany was in a strong position to consolidate its public finances following the economic shock of reunification. The Council fully endorsed Germany's need to maintain a tight monetary policy while undertaking fiscal consolidation primarily through restraints on public expenditure. We noted that Germany's plans amounted to a freeze in public expenditure in real terms up to 1995 and to reduce its general government deficit from 4·1 per cent. in 1992 to 1·9 per cent. in 1995. Meanwhile the Council urged the need for wage moderation to avoid overburdening monetary policy and undermining competitiveness in East Germany and for greater efforts to remove structural rigidities in markets for labour, capital and non-traded goods. The Council noted that Germany expects to fulfil all the convergence criteria in time for a move to Stage 3 of EMU.

The discussion of Italy was a follow up to our discussion last November. Since then Italy has fallen short

of its targets in a number of areas and the Council expressed "serious concern" at the budgetary situation and outlook. The Council called for "exceptional measures" in Italy's fiscal policy, and for action in several structural and institutional areas. The Council stated that the slippage in Italy's budgetary consolidation was such as to undermine the credibility of Italian economic policy. We concluded that without immediate and effective corrective measures Italy would probably fail to meet the EMU convergence criteria.

The Commission's proposals for the future financing of the Community were discussed over lunch and concern was expressed by a number of states, including the United Kingdom, at the size of the Commission's proposed increases in spending. Member States also called for a fuller discussion of the proposals by ECOFIN before the Lisbon European Council.

On indirect taxes, the Presidency tabled nine draft directives covering excise duty rates and structures on tobacco products, mineral oils and alcoholic beverages; VAT rates and structures; and the VAT treatment of second-hand goods (including works of art).

The minor outstanding points on tobacco duty structures were resolved and the draft directive on mineral oil duty structures now allows for the continuation of all our current exemptions and rebates.

On tobacco rates we stressed the importance the United Kingdom attaches to improving the agreement reached at last June's ECOFIN on a minimum rate for cigarettes by supplementing it with an additional minimum cash figure; and we argued for a similar approach to the minimum duty rates for other tobacco products.

On alcohol duty structures, discussion focused on the text relating to intermediate products (fortified wines) which for different reasons a number of Member States (including the United Kingdom) were unable to agree. On alcohol rates we pointed out that as a major producer of spirits, which were in competition with wine, the United Kingdom could not agree a directive which allowed a zero rate for wine but required some Member States significantly to increase their duty rate on spirits (for example Scotch whisky), and that until this point was satisfactorily resolved we could not agree a minimum duty rate for fortified wines.

There was little substantive discussion of VAT issues. In relation to the draft VAT rates and structures directive, we reaffirmed the political commitment made last year that the United Kingdom had no intention of altering our present standard rate which is already above the proposed minimum rate of 15 per cent. In discussion of the VAT treatment of second-hand goods, we made clear the United Kingdom's view that imports of works of art should be exempt from VAT (as at present in the United Kingdom) rather than taxed as proposed, in order to preserve the important United Kingdom and European art market. I expect ECOFIN to return to this dossier on 9 June.

The Capital Adequacy Directive was also discussed and it was agreed that the Presidency's latest proposal addressing the eight most contentious issues would form a good basis for further work towards an overall political compromise. We stressed that there were a number of important issues outstanding, however, especially in the area of large exposures. The Presidency will be seeking a political agreement on these eight main issues at the next ECOFIN on 9 June. In the meantime we shall be pursuing our interests in further meetings of officials.

The guidelines for extending EIB lending to further non-EC countries agreed at the informal meeting in Oporto were also clarified and affirmed.

At the end of the meeting the Commission made a brief statement on the future of customs agents and also announced that a draft directive on carbon and energy taxes would be published soon.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Royal Victoria Hospital

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of theatre sessions per week for each general surgeon in the Royal Victoria hospital.

Mr. Hanley: This information is not available in the form requested. However, the average number of theatre sessions per week for each general surgeon in the Royal Victoria hospital during the financial year 1990-91 was 2·6.

Housing Executive

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many tenants of Northern Ireland Housing Executive residential accommodation have been evicted in each of the last five years for non-payment of rent; and if he will give the figures by district office and region in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I am advised by its chief executive that the number of tenants evicted in each of the last five years for non-payment of rent was as follows:

Region and District	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Belfast					
2	—	—	2	—	2
4	—	—	—	—	1
6	—	—	1	—	—
7	—	—	2	—	1
South-East					
Bangor	—	—	1	—	—
Castlereagh 2	—	1	—	—	—
Lisburn 1	—	—	1	1	—
South					
Banbridge	—	—	—	—	1
Brownlow	—	—	—	—	1
Lurgan	—	—	1	—	2
North East					
Ballymena	1	1	1	1	1
Newtownabbey	1	—	—	1	—
Carrickfergus	—	—	—	—	2
Coleraine[1]	—	1	—	—	1
West					
Cookstown	—	—	—	—	1
Totals	1	3	9	4	13

[1] Coleraine district was part of the former North West region until 1 April 1991.

Housing Executive

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total amount of rent arrears due to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive outstanding by region within Northern Ireland at present and in each of the last two years.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I am advised by its chief executive that the total amount of rent and rates arrears owed to the Housing Executive at 31 March 1992 (the latest date for which figures are available) and at the end of the two previous years was as follows:

Region	*31 March 1990* £ 000	*31 March 1991* £ 000	*31 March 1992* £ 000
Belfast	4,745	4,823	4,628
South East	2,961	3,103	2,907
South	1,623	1,801	1,645
[1]North East	2,916	3,101	3,173
[1]North West	2,900	3,015	—
[1]West	831	847	3,186
Total	15,976	16,690	15,539

[1]Note: With effect from 1 April 1991 the Coleraine district was transferred to the North East region while the remainder of the North West region was merged with the West region.

Patients (Treatment)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give in tabular form the number of patients receiving day surgery and those treated as in-patients since 1985.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers treated as in-patients and day cases since 1985 are listed in the table. The figures relate to discharges and deaths from all specialities in all hospitals (including psychiatric) in Northern Ireland.

	Total in-patient admissions	*Total day cases*	*Total in-patient admissions and day cases*
1985	274,061	16,048	290,109
1986	268,880	21,113	289,993
1987	266,622	29,907	294,329
1988-89	266,530	43,729	310,259
1989-90	270,821	45,141	315,962
1990-91	272,744	49,724	322,468

Planning Commission

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) in how many cases in Belfast South his Department has taken action against refusal to obey decisions of the Planning Commission since 1985; and how many were successful in the courts;

(2) in how many cases in Northern Ireland his Department has taken action against refusal to obey decisions by the planning commissioners since 1985; and how many were successful in the courts.

Mr. Atkins: This information could be provided in the form requested only at disproportionate cost. However, since 1985, the Department of the Environment for NI has taken enforcement action in 530 cases, 20 of them in the Belfast South constituency. In 74 cases, eight of them in Belfast South, court action was necessary and in 48, two of which were in Belfast South, fines were imposed.

Women Doctors

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the number of women who graduated in medicine from Queen's university since 1982 and the number who have been able to advance in their chosen specialities of general practice, surgery, obstetrics, medicine, psychiatry, ENT and radiology.

Mr. Hanley: A total of 555 women have graduated in medicine from Queen's university since 1982. The number who have been able to advance in their chosen specialities is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Planning Permissions

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average length of time taken to grant planning permission for conversion of property and commercial development.

Mr. Atkins: For the year ended 31 March 1992 the median number of calendar days taken to decide planning applications for the conversion of a property to another use was 67. The corresponding figure for applications involving commercial development was 70.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many requests for planning permission take over two years from formal application to decision.

Mr. Atkins: Of the 18,341 planning applications determined in the year ended 31 March 1992, 62 or 0·3 per cent. took over two years to decide.

Shop-mobility Scheme

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals are being considered to provide a shop-mobility scheme in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: There are no plans at present for a shop-mobility scheme in Northern Ireland but I have asked the Belfast chamber of trade and the Belfast city council to consider how such a scheme might be introduced.

General Surgery

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the average weekly number of theatre sessions for general surgery in each of the four area boards since 1985.

Mr. Hanley: The average weekly numbers of theatre sessions in the general surgery speciality in each of the health and social services boards for 1989-90 and 1990-91 are listed in the table. Information prior to 1989-90 is not available centrally.

Board	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Eastern	76·4	76·3
Northern	[1]55·2	55·2
Southern	36·2	38·9
Western	26·8	25·3

[1] Estimate.

Squatting

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement giving details on squatting in each Northern Ireland Housing Executive region, by district office.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I am advised by its chief executive that at 31 March 1992 the total number of squatters by region and district was as follows:

Squatters at 31 March 1992

Region and district	*Number*
Belfast	
1	69
3	88
4	63
6	8
7	16
Region total	244
South East	
Lisburn 3	57
Downpatrick	1
Region total	58
South	
Banbridge	3
Armagh	2
Portadown	3
Region total	8
North East	
Newtownabbey 1	1
Region total	1
West	
Londonderry 1	173
Londonderry 2	14
Londonderry 3	40
Limavady	8
Strabane	9
Region total	244
OVERALL TOTAL	555

Home Loss Payments

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when provision for home loss payments under the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 will be brought up to date for Northern Ireland; and if he will make it his policy to apply the legislation retrospectively to 16 November 1990 to ensure that Northern Ireland home owners are treated on an equal basis with those in England, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Atkins: It is proposed to make such provision in June 1992 and it is my intention to introduce an administrative scheme applying the new criteria retrospectively to 16 November 1990.

Angel Dust

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have been prosecuted for the use of clenbuterol, known as angel dust, in livestock; how many such prosecutions are pending; what further controls of the abuse of clenbuterol he proposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Six persons have been prosecuted under the Medicines Act 1968 for the illegal administration of clenbuterol. No prosecutions are pending.

New powers to control the abuse of clenbuterol and other illegal substances are available under the Animals, Meat and Meat Products (Examination for Residues and Maximum Residue Limits) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 which came into operation on 27 February 1992.

The most important new control is the power to condemn live animals which are found to contain residues of clenbuterol or other illegal substances.

The meat inspection authorities will employ these new powers to the full in their efforts to stamp out the use of illegal drugs by cattle producers.

Voters

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many electors there were in Northern Ireland in 1983; what is the total electorate now; and what plans there are to review both the number of constituencies and constituency boundaries.

Mr. Hanley: The number of electors on the register of electors published in February 1983 who were eligible to vote at parliamentary elections in Northern Ireland was 1,061,185. The corresponding figure for 1992 was 1,141,466.

The review of the number of boundaries of constituencies in Northern Ireland is a matter for the independent Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland but I understand that the commision is unlikely to announce its next periodical review until the current review of the number, names and boundaries of district councils and the wards into which they are divided is complete.

Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the cost of the combined salaries of the director and assistant directors of the new Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education.

Mr. Hanley: The cost is £144,968 per annum.

Housing Grant

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications have been received for each type of housing grant in each month of the current year.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the chairman has advised me that the information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, he has also informed me that the total numbers of applications received in January and February were 1,516 and 2,108 respectively. Since when the scheme has been temporarily shut down, with the exception of a limited range of grants for the disabled, applications for which have been accepted from 14 May.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disabled People

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the improvements made by his Department in provision for the disabled since May 1979.

Mr. Scott: Since 1979 the Department has made a large number of improvements in benefit provision for disabled people. These have been aimed to provide a comprehensive and coherent system of disability benefits which not only gives priority for extra help to those disabled early in life, who have lost the opportunity to earn and save, but also promotes independence and integration.

In that time spending on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people has increased by more than 155 per cent. in real terms to £12·25 billion. On top of this increased expenditure two new disability benefits disability living allowance and disability working allowance were introduced in April 1992.

The other main improvements have been as follows:

Benefit and Improvement
Severe disablement allowance Introduced November 1984. In December 1990 age-related additions introduced.
Mobility allowance Extended to deaf-blind people in April 1990 and double amputees in April 1991. Taken out of taxation in 1982.
Attendance allowance Extended to the under 2s in April 1990, and the higher rate extended to terminally ill people without need to serve waiting period, in October 1990.
Income-related benefits Increases above the rate of inflation on premiums for long-term sick and disabled people from April 1990; child's disablement premium more than doubled to align with adult rate.
Independent Living Fund Introduced June 1988. Provision currently £54 million, 10 times greater than at its start.
Invalid care allowance Extended to non-relatives in 1982 and to married women in 1984.

War Pensions

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many local authorities give a full disregard to war pensions in the calculation of housing and poll tax benefits; and how many authorities take part of the pension into account as income in those calculations.

Mr. Burt: In the financial year 1990-91, 374 of the 479 local authorities reported that they exercised their discretionary power to disregard more than the statutory £10 of a war pension. Of these:

289 authorities disregard both war widows' and war disablement pensions in full, of which five authorities responsible for both benefits operated a scheme for housing benefit only and two operated a scheme for community charge benefit only;

Five authorities fully disregarded war widows' pensions, of which three also disregarded war disablement pensions in part;

28 authorities fully disregarded war disablement pensions, of which six also disregarded war widows' pensions in part.

The remaining 52 authorities took some part of a war widow's or war disablement pension into account as income.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest position regarding discussions to simplify the war pensions scheme.

Mr. Lilley: My noble Friend Lord Henley, the Minister with special responsibility for war pensions, is writing to members of the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions advising that we shall be introducing next April a number of changes which will help to simplify the scheme.

Family Credit

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people will lose from the change in the qualifying hours threshold for income support or family credit from 24 to 16 hours; and what savings will be made after transitional protection has run out in each case.

Mr. Burt: No one who was working, or whose partner was working, between 16 and 24 hours a week and receiving Income Support at the point of change lost their entitlement to that benefit as a result of the change in the hours threshold in income support and family credit. Many of those affected will be families with children who will be better off on family credit than they would have been on income support. Many others will remain on income support under special provisions giving them indefinite protection.

As families affected will either be better off or no worse off, there is expected to be a benefit cost, rather than a saving, as a result of the changes.

Pension Schemes

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the reason for the delay in laying the regulations on disclosure requirements for occupational and personal pension schemes; and when he expects them to be laid.

Miss Widdecombe: The Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes (Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations have been delayed to allow time for consideration of the Social Security Select Committee's report on the "Operation of Pension Funds" in relation to those issues upon which the regulations impinge. We expect the regulations to be laid shortly.

Nicola Clark

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the case of Nicola Clark, setting out the grounds on which her claim for benefits is to be opposed at the hearing to be held on 16 June.

Mr. Scott: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend shortly and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Clothing and Bedding

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants received *(a)* grants and *(b)* loans to enable clothing and bedding to be afforded during 1991-92.

Mr. Scott: Provisional figures show that 81,450 loans and 36,210 grants were awarded for those items.

Benefits

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each of the benefits for which his Department is responsible giving in each case (a) the total number estimated to be eligible for that benefit, *(b)* the total number receiving that benefit, *(c)* the cost in a full year of that benefit and *(d)* an estimate of the cost in a full year if everyone entitled to that benefit received it.

Mr. Scott: Information on the numbers eligible for each benefit is not available. Such information as is available is in the tables.

Table 1: Estimated average numbers receiving benefit at any one time (thousands)

	Year 1991-92
BENEFIT	
Retirement Pension	9,920
Widows' Benefit	350
Unemployment Benefit	650
Sickness Benefit	120
Statutory Sick Pay	345
Invalidity Benefit	1,325
Industrial Disablement Benefit	330
Industrial Death Benefit	25
Maternity Allowance	20
Statutory Maternity Pay	85
Non-contributory RP	35
War Pension	260
Attendance Allowance	970
Invalid Care Allowance	155
Severe Disablement Allowance	300
Mobility Allowance	660
Income Support	4,820
Child Benefit (Children)	12,185
One Parent Benefit	835
Family Credit	350
Rent Allowance	1,115
Rent Rebate	3,085
Community Charge Benefit	6,570

Table 2: Expenditure in cash terms (£ million)

Benefit	*Year 1991-92*
Retirement Pension	25,538
Christmas Bonus-Contributory	114
Widows' Benefit	983
Unemployment Benefit	1,506
Sickness Benefit	268
Statutory Sick Pay	724
Invalidity Benefit	5,255
Industrial Disablement Benefit	600
Industrial Death Benefit	65
Other II Benefits	4
Maternity Allowance	39
Statutory Maternity Pay	344
Guardian's Allowance/CSA	2
Non-contributory RP	37
Christmas Bonus-Non-contributory	8
War Pension	805
Attendance Allowance	1,706
Invalid Care Allowance	262
Severe Disablement Allowance	583
Mobility Allowance	1,061
Income Support	11,891
Child Benefit	5,206
One Parent Benefit	247
Family Credit	617
Independent Living Fund	54
Motability	3
Rent Allowance	1,976
Rent Rebate	583
Community Charge Benefit	1,228

Note: Figures are estimated outturn.
Most central Government support for rent rebates appears in the Department of the Environment and Welsh Office programmes, as rent rebate subsidy in England and Wales is now paid from local authorities' housing revenue accounts.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for each year since its introduction, what was the number of users of the Independent Living Fund, broken down into the geographical areas covered by individual benefit offices.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available.

DEFENCE

HMS Revenge

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when HMS Revenge ended its commission; where the submarine is now; and at which dockyard its fuel will be removed.

Mr. Aitken: HMS Revenge completed her last commission on 13 April 1992 at the Clyde submarine base, Faslane. She will leave shortly for Rosyth, where she will be defuelled and de-equipped in due course.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the report from the National Radiological Protection Board on the health of the British nuclear test veterans will be published.

Mr. Aitken: The update report into mortality and cancer incidence among test participants will be published as soon as practically possible during 1992 consistent with maintenance of the highest standards of scientific rigour.

War Office Buildings

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current use of, or plan for, the Whitehall block of buildings, formerly known as the War Office.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The old War Office building has been undergoing a major refurbishment which is now nearing completion. It will be re-occupied later in the year by headquarters staff of the Ministry of Defence.

Liquid Crystal Displays

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the discovery and exploitation of liquid crystal displays by the former Royal Signals Research Establishment at Malvern; and what developments have been made with this technology by the Defence Research Agency.

Mr. Aitken: I have asked the chief executive of the Defence Research Agency to reply to the hon. Member.

Defence Research Agency

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the level of staffing of the Defence Research Agency on *(a)* 1 April 1992 and *(b)* 1 April 1991; and what is the planned level for 1 April 1993.

Mr. Aitken: I have asked the chief executive of the Defence Research Agency to reply to the hon. Member.

Brawdy Airfield

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent to date on Brawdy airfield survival measures phase B; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The RAF Brawdy airfield survival measures phase 2 project was cancelled in January 1991: the only expenditure incurred was on design work and fees. Precise information on costs is not immediately available and I will write to the hon. Member.

Barrack Modernisation

Mr. John Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent to date on barrack modernisation schemes at *(a)* Fallingbostel, St. Barbara, *(b)* Lippstadt, Churchill and *(c)* Detmold, Hobart; and whether these schemes will be completed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Spending to date on barrack modernisation projects completed in the barracks in question is as follows:

	£ million
(a) Fallingbostel, St. Barbara	4·3
(b) Lippstadt, Churchill	7·5
(c) Detmold, Hobart	5·3

St. Barbara barracks, Fallingbostel has been confirmed for retention and further modernisation work is expected to begin there shortly. On current plans its improvements programme will be completed in 1996. No further work on Churchill barracks, Lippstadt and Hobart barracks, Detmold will be undertaken until decisions on their future are made.

Cambodia

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the composition, role, equipment and command structure of the proposed Royal Navy and Royal Marine contribution to the United Nations force in Cambodia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom plans to provide 11 Royal Navy and Royal Marines Officers and up to 59 other ranks as part of the naval group within the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The role of the United Kingdom element of the naval group will be to assist in patrolling coastal waters and rivers to monitor compliance with the prohibition on the external supply of arms and equipment to the Cambodian factions, agreed as part of the comprehensive political settlement signed in Paris on 23 October 1991. They will be operating from Cambodian vessels and will be taking no arms or special equipment. While in Cambodia, the United Kingdom element will be fully integrated within the overall command structure of the UNTAC naval group.

HMS Courageous and HMS Valiant

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what decisions he has taken on the future of HMS Courageous and HMS Valiant.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMS Courageous was paid off from the fleet in April of this year. HMS Valiant remains in service.

Gulf War

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the numbers of deaths and serious injuries suffered by British service men in Operation Granby/Desert Storm in the Gulf, arising from tank or aircraft fired anti-tank Sabot missiles tipped with depleted uranium launched by allied forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There were no such deaths or injuries.

Vosper Thornycroft

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has yet considered the proposal by Vosper Thornycroft to construct a Sandown class hull; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The company's proposal was carefully considered, but we have no requirement to order another Sandown class Minehunter for some time. Our policy remains to place orders after competition, wherever possible.

Staff Relocation

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 18 May, *Official Report*, column *41*, if he will set out any disadvantages of allocating all naval support command staff on one site.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Some disadvantages, such as inconvenience caused by housing moves for those personnel concerned, are inevitable with any relocation exercise. That is why it is important to assess all relevant factors involved, including the economic cost-effectiveness and the impact on operational efficiency likely to result from any such relocation.

RAF Personnel

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for reducing personnel numbers in the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To achieve the planned force levels for 1 April 1995 announced in the House on 25 July 1990, columns 470-73, the RAF will need to reduce its total manpower by some 11,000 over the period 1 April 1992 to 1 April 1995. This reduction will be achieved mainly through normal turnover, reduced intakes and other manning regulators. A limited redundancy programme currently estimated at some 1,150 and spread over the period 1993 to 1995 will, however, be necessary to remove residual surpluses in specified branches and trades. It is hoped to meet this programme through voluntary redundancy, although some compulsory redundancies may be necessary.

HEALTH

Waiting Lists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who is responsible for maintaining waiting lists in districts where national health service trusts are in operation.

Mr. Sackville: Trusts are responsible for maintaining a record of the patients waiting for treatment by their units.

District health authorities have a responsibility to maintain a record of patients waiting at their directly managed units as well as a record of all their residents waiting for treatment, regardless of where they are waiting.

Hospital Beds, Sheffield

Ms. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the number of beds in Sheffield hospitals, by category, *(a)* in 1990 and *(b)* at present.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the tables. The most recent data on activity (1987-88 to 1990-91) show an increase of 9·4 per cent. in the number of patients treated on a day case basis, and of 11·1 per cent. in the number of in-patients treated.

Sheffield DHA Number of available beds for 1990-91

Ward classification		*Code*	*Wards open overnight*	*Wards open day only*	*Total*
General patients:					
Children:	normal	01	154	8	162
	limited	02	0	0	0
Elderly	normal	03	547	0	547
	limited	04	40	0	40
Other ages	intensive	05	47	0	47
	normal	06	1,530	21	1,551
	limited	07	0	0	0
Younger physically disabled					
Spinal unit		08	41	0	41
Other		09	28	0	28
Neonates:					
Reg designated intensive		10	51	0	51
Non-maternity		11			
Maternity		12	164	0	164
Maternity:					
Consultant		13	123	4	128
Mixed		14	23	0	23
GP		15	0	0	0
Mental Illness:					
Children:	short stay	16	14	0	14
	long stay	17	0	0	0
Elderly:	short stay	18	45	0	45
	long stay	19	196	0	196
Other ages:	secure unit	20	0	0	0
	short stay	21	180	0	180
	long stay	22	238	0	238
Mental Handicap:					
Children:	short stay	23	0	0	0
	long stay	24	0	0	0
Other ages:	short stay	25	10	0	10
	long stay	26	148	0	148
Total		27	3,581	34	3,614
Summary					
A General patients excluding elderly			1,731	29	1,760
B General patients, elderly			588	0	588
C Younger physically disabled			69	0	69
D Neonatal cots not in maternity units			51	0	51
E Maternity			146	4	151
F Mental illness			673	0	673
G Mental handicap			158	0	158
Total (excl neonatal cots in maternity units)			3,416	34	3,450
Acute (A + C + D)			1,851	29	1,880
Neonatal cots in maternity units			164	0	164

Note: Any slight discrepancies between the sum of the constituent items and the totals shown are attributable to rounding to the nearest final digit.

Source: DH Form KH3Q
SD(Fylde) 15/05/92

Sheffield Health Authority
(Number of available beds for 1991-92)

Ward classification	*Code*	*Wards open overnight*	*Wards open day only*	*Total*
General patients				
Children—normal	01	154	8	162
—limited	02	0	0	0
Elderly—normal	03	406		406
—limited	04	0	0	0
Other ages—intensive	05	48	0	48
—normal	06	1,220	45	1,265
—limited	07	0	0	0
Younger physically disabled				
Spinal unit	08	0	0	0
Other	09	17	0	17
Neonates				
Reg designated intensive	10	21	0	21
Non-maternity	11	26	0	26
Maternity	12	111	0	111
Maternity-Consultant	13	127	4	131
Mixed	14	0	0	0
GP	15	0	0	0
Mental Illness				
Children—short stay	16	9	0	9
—long stay	17	0	0	0
Elderly—short stay	18	68	0	68
—long stay	19	189	0	189
Other ages—secure unit	20	0	0	0
—short stay	21	140	0	140
—long stay	22	178	0	178
Mental Handicap				
Children—short stay	23	0	0	0
—long stay	24	0	0	0
Other ages—short stay	25	1	0	1
—long stay	26	178	0	178
Total	27	2,893	57	2,950

Please note: Day beds have increased as more work is carried out in day care units.
Elderly beds have decreased as some of this work has been transferred to Housing Associations.

Dentists

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the working of the new dentists' contract.

Dr. Mawhinney: The new dental contract, introduced in October 1990, is the first major change to NHS dentistry since 1948. It encourages preventive dentistry and provides all round continuing care. Benefits to patients include treatment plans, emergency cover and repair and replacement of certain restorations free of charge.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made on the review of national health service dentistry; and what assessment she has made of the effect of the proposed fee levels on the number of dentists remaining within the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are not yet able to say how the review of dental remuneration to which we are committed will be carried forward. The level of dental fees in 1992-93 is a matter for the dental rates study group which will meet shortly.

Pre-senile Dementia

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what proposals she has for funding a research programme into *(a)* incidence, *(b)* treatment and *(c)* recovery rates from pre-senile dementia; (2) what statistics she has on the social and financial background factors in the multi-factorial epidemiology of pre-senile dementia.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are conducting research into Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease which is a very rare form of pre-senile dementia.

Our major research effort is on the much larger numbers of those suffering from dementia in the over-65 age group.

Patients Statistics

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average number of patients waiting for treatment *(a)* as in-patients and *(b)* as day care patients for each financial year from 1988-89 in Darlington.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table.

Patients waiting for treatment—Darlington Health Authority

	March 1989	*March 1990*	*March 1991*
In-patients	2,393	2,449	2,364
Day cases	621	711	678
TOTAL	3,014	3,160	3,042

Patients treated from waiting lists

	Twelve months to: March 1989	March 1990	March 1991
In-patients	5,230	5,250	5,532
Day cases	1,635	1,909	1,987
TOTAL	6,865	7,159	7,519

Tampons

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to have adequate safety warnings of the risk of toxic shock issued with tampons.

Mr. Sackville: The Government are working with tampon manufacturers to reduce to the minimum the risk of toxic shock syndrome. Every pack of tampons contains a leaflet giving information on toxic shock and advice on how to use tampons properly, so minimising the risk. Manufacturers, in agreement with the Departments of Health and of Trade and Industry, have recently improved labelling of tampon packets and instruction leaflets. The warnings on packets emphasise the need to read the instruction leaflet which now gives more information on toxic shock, including what to do if symptoms occur.

Charitable Fund-raising

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority for the financial years (i) 1990-91, (ii) 1991-92 and (iii) 1992-93 to date *(y)* the number of appeals and *(z)* the amounts required being raised by charitable fund-raising by the national health service; and to what the proceeds from these appeals will be allocated.

Mr. Sackville: Detailed information on the number and nature of charitable fund-raising appeals by the national health service is not collected centrally. However, the accounts of health authorities and special trustees in England for 1990-91 (the latest available) show that a number of those authorities and trustees raised an aggregate net total of £5·9 million from fund raising conducted under section 5 of the National Health Service Act 1980. This sum excludes amounts raised on behalf of the National Health Service by independent, registered charitable trusts which account separately for their activity.

We have made it clear that the money raised through these very worthwhile voluntary efforts will not be deducted from the funds the Government allocate to the national health service.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total sum paid out in fees by her Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is her estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: It is not possible to apportion expenditure between the Departments of Health and Social Security prior to 1985-86. The estimated expenditure for each succeeding financial year from 1985-86 on fees and expenses for management consultants was as follows:

Financial year	£ million
1985-86	0·479
1986-87	2·103
1987-88	1·244
1988-89	1·584
1989-90	4·870
1990-91	2·870
1991-92	2·806

The figures up to and including 1988-89 are approximate as expenditure was from a joint Health and Social Security budget. In some cases expenditure has been apportioned where consultants have been engaged on both health and social security matters.

The estimate of expenditure for 1992-93 is £4·229 million.

Health Care, Rossendale

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps her Department is taking to improve women's health care in Rossendale, particularly in relation to the prevention and treatment of cervical cancer.

Mr. Sackville: The United Kingdom was the first country in the European Community and one of the first countries in the world to establish a national cervical screening programme based on computerised call and recall. The Government are committed to this programme and cervical cancer was specifically mentioned in the Health of the Nation Green Paper. To improve uptake of cervical screening GP target payments were introduced; 91 per cent. of GP practices now receive a target payment.

For information on the local provision of health services in Rossendale, including services for women's health care and the prevention and treatment of cervical cancer, my hon. Friend may wish to contact Mr. William Ashworth, chairman of Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority.

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps her Department is taking to reduce the infant mortality rate *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Rossendale.

Mr. Sackville: The infant mortality rate for England is at an all time low of 7·4 per 1,000 live births in 1991 compared to rate of 12·8 in 1979.

One of the major priorities for the NHS this year will be to set targets to reduce the number of stillbirths and deaths in infancy. This, together with the NHS' participation in the nationwide Confidential Enquiry into Stillbirths and Deaths in infancy, announced by my right hon. Friend the then Minister of Health last summer, should help to ensure the continued reduction of these tragic losses.

For information on the provision of local health services my hon. Friend may wish to contact Mr. William Ashworth, chairman of Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Sackville: The register of surveys maintained by the Central Statistical Office lists the following surveys carried out since 1 November 1991:

Drugs: Parent's Monitor
Nursing Monitor 1992: Wave 3
Drugs "Double Head" Research
Wessex Drugs Research
Attitudes Among Patients Leaving Trust Hospitals

Community Support Services

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take steps to require all meetings of community support services to be held in public except where the confidentiality of patients would be compromised.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 18 May at column *56*. The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 is also applicable to regional health authorities and NHS trusts.

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department received an application for trust status, or an expression of interest in trust status, from the community support services in Wirral health authority; what the outcome of that application is; and if she will give the reasons for the decision.

Dr. Mawhinney: Wirral community unit was one of the 153 hospitals and other units which expressed interest in the autumn of 1991 in applying to become an NHS trust in April 1993. It has not so far applied formally. If the unit does apply, there will be three months public consultation on the application, as well as a detailed assessment of the application, after which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will decide whether to establish the unit as a trust.

Births, Islington

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in each of the past five years have been removed from general practitioners' lists in the Camden and Islington family health service area as a result of asking for a home confinement when giving birth.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no requirement to record such information.

Hospital Doctors (Working Hours)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior hospital doctors she expects to be working more than a 40-hour week by the end of 1994; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The aim of the new deal is to reduce junior hospital doctors' maximum average contracted hours (which includes on-call time) to 72 per week by 31 December 1994. It is the intention, however, that no doctor will actually work more than an average of 56 hours per week by this time.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the total expenditure by her Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if she will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: Functions which are commonly associated with press and public relations are carried out by the Department's Information division. Manpower and running costs of this division are:

	£ million
1989-90 Expenditure	0·890
1990-91 Expenditure	1·250
1991-92 Estimated Expenditure	1·540
1992-93 Estimated Expenditure	1·690

Information for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88 is not available.

Homeopathic Treatment

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how her Department intends to make provision for the demand for national health service homeopathic treatment in the Bristol area; and what are her Department's plans for the Bristol Homeopathic hospital.

Mr. Yeo: Responsibility for the purchasing of health services in the Bristol area, including homeopathic services, rests with the Bristol and district health authority. The health authority have given an undertaking that homeopathic services will continue to be provided for Bristol residents for as long as demand exists. The Department has no plans for the Bristol Homeopathic hospital. The hospital is not included in the asset base of the United Bristol Healthcare Trust and therefore decisions relating to its current or future use remain the responsibility of the Bristol and district health authority in consultation with the South Western regional health authority.

Victoria Central Hospital, Wallasey

Ms. Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if a decision has yet been made on the likely future for the Victoria central hospital, Wallasey.

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. R. S. Gordon, chairman of Wirral health authority, to discuss any specific aspects of the hospital's future.

Section 64 Grants

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to make an announcement on the determination of section 64 grant applications for 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The overall provision for support to voluntary organisations under the Section 64 General Scheme for 1992-93 has been set at £17·8 million—a 12 per cent. increase in one year. Most grants are awarded for a three-year period and the majority of those organisations applying for renewal in 1992-93 have been notified of the outcome. Most of the organisations making new applications have also been notified and the remainder will be informed as soon as possible.

Project 2000

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any additional colleges of nursing have been approved to implement Project 2000 nurse training.

Mr. Sackville: Agreement has been given to the implementation of Project 2000 in 15 colleges of nursing during 1992-93, subject to the necessary educational approval being obtained from the English National Board. This will bring the total number of colleges offering these courses in England to 64. The approval of these

schemes will result in complete implementation of Project 2000 in four regions (Oxford, Wessex, South Western and East Anglia) and will cover at least 65 per cent. of pre-registration student places in the other 10 regions.

The new schemes cover the following health authorities:

North East Thames RHA	–	North London
Mersey RHA	–	Chester and Wirral
Northern RHA	–	Northumbria
Bethlem and Maudsley SHA	–	Bethlem and Maudsley
South Western RHA	–	Tor
Wessex RHA	–	Bath and Swindon
West Midlands RHA	–	Queen Elizabeth
Yorkshire RHA	–	Humberside
Yorkshire RHA	–	Airedale and Bradford
Trent RHA	–	Sheffield and North Trent (extension)
East Anglian RHA	–	Norfolk
North Western RHA	–	Lancashire
South East Thames RHA	–	Sussex and Kent Institute
South West Thames RHA	–	College to be confirmed by RHA
North West Thames RHA	–	Hertfordshire

The increased funding for 1992-93 of £98 million brings to £207 million the amount provided for Project 2000 implementation since 1989-90. This demonstrates the Government's clear commitment to the development of a more flexible and autonomous nursing workforce, which is better equipped to respond to the challenges and changes of the future.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will bring forward proposals to ensure that residents of care or nursing homes have security of tenure in law;

(2) if she will bring forward proposals to require the completion of a written contract for accommodation and services prior to admissions to care and nursing homes.

Mr. Yeo: I have no plans to do so. "Home Life" the established code of practice for residential care recommends that, before admission, residents should be given a full statement of the terms and conditions on which accommodation and care are offered, including details of the procedure for terminating the contract between the home and the resident. A copy of the code is available in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has regarding the adequacy of the monitoring by inspection units of residential care and nursing homes during the 12 months ended 31 March.

Mr. Yeo: Local authority inspection units are responsible only for the inspection of residential care homes. Health authorities inspect nursing homes.

In November 1991, the Department's social services inspectorate carried out a survey by postal questionnaire of the stage of development reached by inspection units to the end of September. The results were encouraging, showing widespread compliance with both the letter and the spirit of our directions and policy guidance. In 1992-93 the inspectorate will carry out a programme of more detailed and evaluative monitoring.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to change the current inspection arrangements for care or nursing homes.

Mr. Yeo: None.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will introduce a requirement for the regular statutory review of the individual circumstances of all residents in residential care or nursing homes, where the resident concerned or their representative so desires.

Mr. Yeo: We see no need to do so. "Home Life", the established code of practice for residential care, acknowledges the need for regular reviews and gives clear practice guidance on the subject. A copy of the code is available in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the impact of the April 1993 change in community care on the current number of residential or nursing places in private homes.

Mr. Yeo: The Government are committed to a mixed economy of residential and nursing home care and it expects that the independent sector (private and voluntary) will continue to play a significant role in the provision of such care. New community care arrangements to be introduced in April 1993 will link the provision of care more closely to assessment of needs. Significant numbers of people will continue to need residential or nursing home care, particularly as the numbers of very elderly people continue to increase. However, it is generally expected that in some cases alternative, more appropriate forms of care will be able to be provided. The Government therefore share the widely held view that there is likely to be a decline in the rate of growth in residential care as a whole.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she has given regarding the inspection by local authorities of the audited accounts of private residential care or nursing homes *(a)* as part of the annual inspection process and *(b)* prior to the placement of a contract under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Mr. Yeo: The Department does not give local or health authorities detailed guidance about how they should carry out their statutory inspections of private residential care and nursing homes. "Home Life"—a code of practice for residential care endorsed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—recommends that financial implications should be among the matters discussed with those proposing to open a home.

The policy guidance "Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond" advises local authorities to check the credentials of potential contractors, including their financial standing. It is for authorities to decide how best to do this.

Copies of the code and the guidance are available in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to monitor the adequacy of the medical care available to residents of care homes.

Mr. Yeo: Those who run registered residential care homes are required by law to arrange for residents to receive necessary medical treatment and to keep records of such treatment. We would expect these arrangements to be monitored in the course of the regular inspections that local inspection units undertake.

The Department is preparing revised and updated guidance about the health care of elderly people in residential care, for use in both local authority and independent sector homes.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will bring forward proposals to allow persons in residential or nursing care homes the same access to domiciliary, health and social services as persons living in their own homes.

Mr. Yeo: People in residential homes of all types have the same rights to receive social services and health services under the National Health Service as people living in their own homes.

Patients in independent nursing homes already have access to primary care services and acute hospital services.

The Registered Homes Act 1984 requires the person registered to provide adequate staff, equipment, facilities and services bearing in mind the age, sex and condition of the patients being cared for. Our guidance to health authorities is that support services such as physiotherapy and incontinence materials fall within the care that nursing homes could reasonably be expected to provide for their patients. Health authorities may provide support services to nursing home patients at their discretion.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been undertaken as to the extent to which elderly persons positively choose to enter institutional care.

Mr. Yeo: The Department has funded a recently-published study by the Policy Studies Institute, which examined issues of choice, participation and satisfaction among elderly people "at the margin" of community and residential care. The study explored, among other issues, the extent to which elderly people positively choose to enter institutional care.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the relative levels of mental and physical functioning of residents in local authority part III accommodation compared with residents in private residential care.

Mr. Yeo: The Department has in recent years funded a number of research studies on residential care, at the universities of Kent and York. One focus of these studies has been on the level of physical and mental functioning of residents in local authority part III accommodation and private residential care. The results were published in June 1991 by the personal social services research unit, university of Kent, in discussion paper No. 725, a copy of which will be placed in the Library.

Long-term Care Insurance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy towards long-term care insurance schemes.

Mr. Yeo: The Government welcome schemes which widen opportunities for people to make provision for meeting future long-term care needs.

Nursing Care of the Elderly

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been given to local authorities regarding the placement of contracts for the residential nursing care of the elderly with establishments outside individual local authority boundaries.

Mr. Yeo: The White Paper "Caring for People", (Cm. 849), made it clear that under arrangements to be introduced from 1 April 1993 people assessed by local authorities as requiring nursing home care will, subject to the availability of resources, be able to seek a place in an establishment in another authority's area. Where the cost of that home would be more than the authority would normally be willing to fund individuals, or their relatives, may agree to pay the difference. Subsequent guidance has emphasised the need to take full account of individual's preferences in making placements in residential care and nursing homes.

Loans Criteria

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria are laid down by her Department concerning the granting of loans to district health authorities by regional health authorities.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities have no powers to borrow funds. Regional health authorities are responsible for setting allocations to their districts, and may agree to increase a district's allocation in one year on the understanding that a compensating reduction is made in a later year. There are no centrally laid down criteria for such adjustments, since each case must be considered on its merits and account has to be taken of the region's overall priorities and resources.

Stockport

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for ensuring that any future trust in Stockport will charge affordable prices for its health services.

Dr. Mawhinney: All NHS trusts depend for their income on their ability to secure contracts with local purchasers. They need to be able to compete in terms of cost and quality with other local NHS provider units. In addition, trusts are expected to set their prices for NHS contracts using principles common to the NHS as a whole. They are not allowed to cross-subsidise services or to build in profit margins.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to make an announcement concerning the funding of community care during the next financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney: As we have always made clear, announcements about the funding of community care in 1993-94 will be made in the context of the local government expenditure survey.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the extent to which local authority housing departments and other local housing agencies have been involved in the drawing up of community care plans.

Mr. Yeo: The successful implementation of "Caring For People" is very dependent on effective collaboration between agencies, including housing authorities and other housing providers. In drawing up community care plans local authorities must consult their local health and housing authorities as well as others concerned with the provision of community care services. The role played by housing authorities in preparing community care plans is one of the issues addressed in our six monthly monitoring of the progress authorities are making in implementing "Caring For People". The monitoring reports have recently been received and are being assessed.

Leaflets on Sun's Rays

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library leaflets produced by her Department which give advice about exposure to the sun's rays; and if she will make a statement about changes to this advice.

Mr. Sackville: Copies of the Health Education Authority leaflet "Are you dying to get a suntan" are available in the Library. The independent expert advisory Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) have been asked to advise on what further steps, if any, Government should consider in relation to ultraviolet radiation and health risks. The Committee's advice, which will be published, is expected shortly.

Maternity Services

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to respond to the second report from the Health Committee of Session 1991-92, on maternity services; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: In the summer.

Prescriptions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out for each year from 1979 the total number of prescriptions issued *(a)* by general practitioners and *(b)* by hospitals, showing, for each year and category, the number of prescriptions paid for by the recipient and the number exempt from payment, and showing, separately, the number in each category of exemption.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 20 May 1992]:* The available information is in the tables. Information about items prescribed by hospitals and dispensed by hospital pharmacists is not available.

Table I.

Number of items prescribed by general practitioners and hospitals and dispensed by community pharmacists in each year from 1979 to 1991 for which patients (a) paid a charge when the item was dispensed; (b) did not pay a charge when the item was dispensed, and reason for non-payment (millions)

Year	(a) (i) Number of items prescribed and dispensed	(a) (ii) Number of items in (i) for which a charge was paid when the item was dispensed	(b) (iii) Number of items in (i) for which a charge was not paid when the item was dispensed by reason for non-payment		
			Exempt	Pre-payment certificate	No Charge Contraceptives
1979	304·6	108·7	181·3	10·4	4·2
1980	303·3	90·9	192·6	15·2	4·6
1981	300·0	76·5	200·0	18·3	5·2
1982	311·3	76·5	210·4	18·4	6·0
1983	315·3	70·6	220·7	17·8	6·2
1984	320·5	69·6	226·5	17·5	6·9
1985	318·7	63·2	232·6	16·9	5·9
1986	322·5	60·3	241·3	15·7	5·3
1987	335·1	60·6	253·8	15·6	5·1
1988	346·5	61·6	263·5	16·1	5·3
1989	351·9	61·4	268·1	16·8	5·6
1990	360·5	60·1	276·9	17·6	5·9
1991	370·8	56·1	290·5	18·2	5·9

Table II

Number of items prescribed by general practitioners and hospitals and dispensed by community pharmacists to patients exempt from prescription charges in each year from 1979 to 1991 by category of exemption (millions)

Year	Exemption categories: The young[1]	Retirement pensioners	Family health service authority exempt[2]	NHS low income scheme charge remission	War/service pensioners	No declaration[3]	Declaration not specific[4]	Total all exemption categories
1979	34·3	100·9	12·4	15·9	0·9	12·9	4·0	181·3
1980	37·0	108·8	14·4	16·7	0·9	10·8	4·0	192·6
1981	35·5	110·9	15·2	19·5	0·9	13·8	4·2	200·0
1982	40·1	112·7	15·9	24·2	0·9	12·6	4·0	210·4
1983	39·1	117·2	16·6	28·2	0·9	14·8	4·0	220·7
1984	38·2	121·0	17·1	31·9	0·9	13·3	4·1	226·5
1985	38·3	125·7	17·0	32·5	0·9	14·3	4·0	232·6
1986	36·6	129·6	17·4	36·3	0·9	16·1	4·5	241·3
1987	38·2	135·6	18·3	39·3	0·8	17·0	4·6	253·8

Year	The young[1]	Retirement pensioners	Exemption categories: Family health service authority exempt[2]	Exemption categories: NHS low income scheme charge remission	Exemption categories: War/service pensioners	Exemption categories: No declaration[3]	Exemption categories: Declaration not specific[4]	Total all exemption categories
1988	40·6	142·6	21·0	36·4	0·9	17·9	4·0	263·5
1989	40·5	147·3	22·4	34·7	0·9	18·8	3·6	268·1
1990	40·0	153·2	23·5	36·4	0·9	19·5	3·4	276·9
1991	41·8	159·7	24·4	40·6	0·8	19·8	3·4	290·5

Notes:
[1]Children under the age of 16 and young people under age 19 in full-time education.
[2]Patients with specified medical conditions, pregnant women and nursing mothers.
[3]Items for which patients indicated more than one Exemption category.
[4]Block prescriptions for schools or institutions.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Peru

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take up with the Peruvian Government the question of human rights abuses in that country; if he will arrange to raise these matters in the United Nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern. We take every appropriate opportunity to emphasise to the Peruvian authorities their obligations to respect and protect human rights. The Peruvian charge d'affaires is due to call at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 22 May. When President Fujimori called on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister earlier this year, he was left in no doubt about the strength of feeling in this country. The next occasion on which this matter might be raised at the United Nations would be the autumn meeting of the General Assembly.

Turkey

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government will review the sale of arms to Turkey in the light of concern about Turkey's human rights record, in particular in respect to its Kurdish population.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are not considering an embargo on arms sales to Turkey. Turkey is a NATO ally, which has given and continues to give firm support to the Coalition during and after the Gulf conflict. Arms sales to Turkey are subject to the standard export licence procedure. Under this procedure, all applications are scrutinized in accordance with stringent criteria. These include an assessment of the recipient country's human rights record.

Mikhail Nizguretsky

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Mikhail Nizguretsky and his family of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made various representations to the Russian authorities on behalf of Mr. Nizguretsky. In Moscow in March I raised human rights issues with the Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister, including the case of Mr. Nizguretsky.

Albania

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements have now been made for United Kingdom diplomatic representations to Albania; and what proposals he has to establish a mission in that country in the future.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Sir Stephen Egerton KCMG, Her Majesty's ambassador to the Italian Republic has been additionally appointed as non-resident ambassador to the Republic of Albania. There are at present no plans to establish a resident mission in the country.

Refuseniks

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Bennisa Heifetz of Moscow who would like to join her son in Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made various representations to the Russian authorities on behalf of Ms. Heifetz. In Moscow in March I raised human rights issues with the Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister, including the case of Ms. Heifetz.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Yevgeny Rozenblit and his family of Sverdlovsk.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of Yevgeny Rozenblit and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Semyon Kreiman and his family of Moscow.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of Semyon Kreiman and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

British Council

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department has received an application for an exhibition relating to the work of the British Council to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have

been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 13 July to 17 July 1992.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Goodlad: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office estimates that it will spend £175,000 on fees to management consultants in the 1992-93 financial year.

Charges to the subhead which covers management consultants for the financial years 1983-84 to 1991-92 are as follows:

	£
1983-84	141,189·61
1984-85	160,593·26
1985-86	121,673·81
1986-87	201,846·61
1987-88	200,122·84
1988-89	213,835·37
1989-90	272,164·00
1990-91	274,313·00
1991-92	180,690·00

These are total charges to the subhead and include payments other than to management consultants.

Figures for the financial years 1979-80 to 1982-83 are no longer available.

St. Helena and Tristan da Cunha

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last reviewed the territorial limits of Tristan da Cunha and St. Helena.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The territorial limits for St. Helena and Dependencies including Tristan da Cunha were last reviewed prior to the publication of the St. Helena and Dependencies (Territorial Sea) Order 1989 which came into force on 1 January 1990 and set territorial limits at 12 miles.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to establish a 200-mile limit around St. Helena and Tristan da Cunha.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Fishery limits of 200 miles were declared for St. Helena under the St. Helena Fishery Limits Ordinance 1977. For Tristan da Cunha the 200-mile fishery limits were declared under the Tristan da Cunha Fishery Limits Ordinance 1983. Fishery limits are distinct from the limits of territorial waters.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for exploiting the tourism potential of Tristan da Cunha and St. Helena via Ascension Island.

Mr. Garel-Jones; The Government of St. Helena are examining proposals for the promotion of a small tourism industry on the island, but exploitation would be dependent on the introduction of a vessel that would provide a frequent service between St. Helena and Ascension Island.

There are no plans to exploit the tourism potential of Tristan da Cunha.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the advice he has received from the Hydrographer about the establishment of 200 mile limits around St. Helena and Tristan da Cunha.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Hydrographic details of the 200-mile fishery limits for St. Helena and Tristan da Cunha are published and are on selected Admiralty charts available from the hydrographic office and chart agents.

Thailand

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Thailand about recent human rights violations.

Mr. Goodlad: I summoned the Thai ambassador in London on 19 May to express our serious concern about the recent violence in Bangkok and the excessive use of force by the Thai army. I urged the Thai Government and army to show maximum restraint in their handling of the situation and to avoid further casualties. Along with our EC partners, we are keeping the situation in Thailand under regular review.

Cyprus

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications for the level of contribution of British forces to the United Nations forces in Cyprus of the decision by other nations participating in the force to end their contributions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have not been informed of any such decision.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress there has been since 1974 towards a settlement in Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Progress towards a settlement on Cyprus has been disappointingly slow. However, there are current grounds for optimism; all sides have accepted the ideas endorsed in SCR 750, and the recent round of talks by UN envoys went well.

North Korea

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information Her Majesty's Government possess on the nuclear reactor made public by the North Korean nuclear authorities on 14 April.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Copies of an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) press release about North Korea's nuclear inventory as submitted to the IAEA in accordance with her full-scope safeguards agreement, and a transcript of the press briefing given by IAEA Director-General Hans Blix, have been placed in the Library of the House. The inventory refers to three nuclear reactors. Further details of the information provided by North Korea are held in confidence by the IAEA.

Dependent Territories Committee

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to establish a dependent territories committee; and if he will publish its terms of reference and composition.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is carrying out a review of how best to conduct relations between Whitehall and the Caribbean Dependent Territories. No decisions have yet been taken.

The results of the review will be announced to Parliament in due course.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Hurd: No public opinion surveys have been commissioned or carried out by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office since 1 November 1991.

Hong Kong

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what powers he has to increase the opportunities for candidates other than the Governor General to be appointed chancellor of the two universities in Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: The relevant laws in Hong Kong provide that the chancellor of the three universities shall be the Governor of Hong Kong.

Cambodia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards Cambodia; and what recent measures he has taken to promote peace in that country.

Mr. Goodlad: As signatories, we support the agreements on a comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodia conflict signed in Paris in October 1991. The United Kingdom played an active part in the negotiations leading up to these agreements.

We will continue to work both through the United Nations and bilaterally to help ensure that the agreements are implemented fully, leading to free and fair elections, a constitution and the formation of a new Cambodian Government next year.

Lockerbie Bombing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the offer made to him in Cairo by Libyan representatives in relation to the Lockerbie bombing.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Libyans have made a number of offers, most recently the offer in the letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations from the Libyan Foreign Minister. Although there has been some movement in the Libyan position, none of these offers has amounted to compliance with Security Council resolution 731 which would need to include the handling over of the two accused for trial in Scotland or the United States.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Non-payment of Fines

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are currently imprisoned for non-payment of fines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 31 March 1992 about 330 fine defaulters were held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales.

Filipino Wives

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Filipino wives have been granted entry to the United Kingdom in each of the last five years on grounds of marriage to United Kingdom men; and how many applications have been refused in each of those five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is available only in respect of such wives applying for a settlement entry clearance in the Philippines in the years 1990 and 1991. This information is given in the table.

Annual figures on admissions of wives or fiancees of Filipino nationality are published in table 1 of the annual command papers "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom". Copies of the 1987-90 command papers are in the library. The corresponding figure for 1991 was 530. These admission figures will include Filipino wives and fiancees granted entry clearance other than in the Philippines and any joining non-British husbands settled in the United Kingdom. They do not take account of the year in which the entry clearance was granted.

Estimated number of Filipino wives of British husbands applying for a settlement entry clearance in Manila

Year	*Entry clearance applications*	
	Granted[1]	*Refused initially*
1990	200	110
1991	200	140

[1] Including granted on appeal.

Firearms

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the regulation of ownership of air rifles and pistols.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The acquisition, possession and use of air weapons are already strictly regulated by the Firearms Act 1968. In its second annual report (a copy of which is in the Library) the Firearms Consultative Committee, the independent statutory body established to advise Government on the firearms legislation, concluded that the law as it stands is adequate to deal with current levels of misuse. I have no plans to introduce further controls.

Prison Medical Service

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future structure, establishment and role of the prison medical service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The 1990 efficiency scrutiny of the prison medical service, now known as the health care service for prisoners, set forth a substantial agenda of proposed reform in the way health services in prisons are organised and delivered. The scrutiny found that the HCSP should be drawn to the centre of prison service management as a whole, but also that a closer alignment with the national health service would be beneficial. This means a wider role for the HCSP and a greater emphasis on health promotion and illness prevention.

We have accepted either fully or in principle virtually all of the 83 scrutiny recommendations, and the process of implementation is underway. The biggest and immediate task arising from the scrutiny is to test out the recommendation that the HCSP should become a purchaser of services through contracts with the NHS (or other providers). As indicated in the consultation paper "Contracting for Prison Health Services", issued last August, the evidence for or against this model can only be produced by pilot projects in selected establishments. The first of these will be ready to start later this year.

The challenge is to provide for prisoners the same standards of health care as is provided by the NHS.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Jack: The Department has carried out five surveys since 1 November 1991 which include questions to test public opinion:

Questions were included in the Gallup Omnibus survey to assess public attitudes towards the police.

A national survey of car users was carried out in January 1991, asking about driver's attitudes to car security and to the gravity of car crime.

A survey of the attitudes of the public to drugs and their prevention was carried out in four of the twenty areas with Home Office drugs prevention teams (Bradford, Glasgow, Nottingham and the London Borough of Lewisham).

Fieldwork for the British Crime Survey was conducted between January and April 1992. Although primarily about respondents' experiences and behaviour, the 1992 survey included questions on attitudes to sentencing and attitudes to the police.

The England and Wales sweep of the second International Crime Survey was carried out at the beginning of 1992. 2,000 adults were asked about experience of crime and opinions on various crime related issues. Several other countries took part.

Mr. Adol Owen-Williams

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the treatment of a United States citizen, Mr. Adol Owen-Williams, by immigration officials at Gatwick airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have replied to earlier questions from three hon. Members and refer the right hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 19 May at column 93. On 20 May, 10 letters had been received from members of the public.

Arrests

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests there were in London during the past year for *(a)* motoring offences, *(b)* theft and *(c)* crimes of violence.

Mr. Jack: Information on the number of arrests by offence category is not available centrally. However, the available information for the Metropolitan police district is published in the Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for 1990 at table 13.4, a copy of which is in the Library. The 1991 report is not yet available.

Police Cells

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted prisoners are held in police cells in the *(a)* Northumbria, *(b)* Durham, *(c)* Cleveland, *(d)* North Yorkshire and *(e)* Cumbria police force areas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On Wednesday 20 May 1992, the following convicted prisoners were held by the force concerned:

	Prisoners
Northumbria	14
Durham	6
Cleveland	2
North Yorkshire	20
Cumbria	19

Knife Offences

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences were committed in the Greater London area in each of the last five years in which a knife has been used.

Mr. Jack: Information on the use of knives is not collected centrally. However, information on the number of offences of violence against the person and robbery in which sharp instruments were involved is published annually in the report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. The most recent information available is shown at table 13.3 of the Commissioner's 1990 report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to change the present law relating to the use of knives in criminal offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: There are already strict controls on the possession of knives in public and the courts have and use stiff penalties to deal with offenders whose crimes have involved the use of a knife. The Criminal Justice Act 1991 will enhance the power of the courts to protect the public from serious harm from a violent offender, by allowing them to impose a longer custodial sentence than would otherwise by justified by the seriousness of the offence.

Parliamentary Boundaries Review

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the electoral quota for the parliamentary boundaries review published on 21 February 1991; and what was the electoral quota for the last review.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The electoral quota applicable to the fourth general review of parliamentary constituencies, announced by the Boundary Commission for England on 21 February 1991, is 69,281.

The comparable figure for the third general review was 65,753.

Wheel Clamping

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints he has received about wheel clamping in London.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the last 12 months my Department has received eight letters from members of the public in relation to wheel clamping in London.

Mr. Ghazanfer Ali

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to ensure that Mr. Ghazanfer Ali, a Pakistani national, at present detained in Pakistan, who has been granted indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom, does not lose his automatic right to rejoin his wife and family in the United Kingdom if he is unable to re-enter the United Kingdom within two years of leaving the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: If Mr. Ali is out of the United Kingdom for longer than two years he will need to apply for a visa. Any application that Mr. Ali makes will be considered on its merits under the relevant part of the immigration rules.

United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the organisation and funding of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 18 May at column *10*.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will establish a departmental working group to report on electoral registration and connected matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We shall be undertaking a general review of electoral law and procedures in the light of experience of the general election. This will include meetings with the main political parties and with the local authority associations. In addition, OPCS are currently carrying out research to assess the accuracy of the electoral register using sample information from the 1991 census. The conclusions of the review, together with the results of the research, will assist us in considering whether any changes may need to be made to arrangements for electoral registration.

Dangerous Dogs Act

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 with a view to including Rottweilers within the scope of section 1 of that Act and seek to extend the Act to give mandatory powers to local authorities to stipulate that dogs falling within section 1 of the Act must be kept in secure and screened compounds.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The powers available under section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 apply only to dogs bred for fighting or having the characteristics of a dog bred for fighting and could not therefore be used in respect of Rottweilers.

Section 2 of the 1991 Act provides a reserve power for the Secretary of State, subject to consultation and the agreement of Parliament, to impose certain conditions on other types of dog considered to represent a serious danger to the public.

My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to use this power but we shall keep the matter under review in the light of the operation of existing measures for controlling dogs, including section 3 of the 1991 Act. This provides tough penalties against those who allow dogs of any type to become dangerously out of control in a public place. We consider that this provides a powerful incentive to dog owners to exercise proper and responsible control of their dogs.

Women Police Officers

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of women police officers serving in the Metropolitan police who hold senior officer rank; and if he will list the rank that they hold.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of women police officers serving in the Metropolitan police service—in the rank of inspector and above on 31 April is as follows:

	Number
Chief superintendent	5
Superintendent	7
Chief inspector	12
Inspector	35

Firearms

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many shotgun certificates were on issue at 31 December in each year from 1985 in each police force area.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of shotgun certificates on issue at 31 December in each year from 1986 to 1990 are shown in table 4 of Home Office statistical bulletin numbers 2/88, 33/88, 18/89, 26/90 and 23/91. Copies of these bulletins are in the Library. Figures for 1985 are not readily available by police force area and those for 1991 are not yet available.

Police Special Branches

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he wil now make it his practice to provide substantive answers to questions concerning operational activities of police special branches.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. The responsibility for police operational activities rests with chief officers of police.

Anti-discrimination Legislation

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the introduction of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in the past six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have received no representations in the past six months regarding the introduction of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, but have received a number from various bodies and individuals about different aspects of discrimination legislation.

The Commission for Racial Equality published its consultation document on their second review of the Race Relations Act 1976 in July 1991. We will give careful consideration to the formal recommendations which the Commission intends to put forward later this year.

The Equal Opportunities Commission submitted formal proposals to amend the Sex Discrimination Act in March 1988 and wrote to the Home Secretary with revisions in February 1992. These are receiving serious consideration by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, along with proposals from other bodies.

A number of representations have also been received in the past six months calling for the law to be clarified in relation to discrimination against homosexuals.

Colleagues in the Department of Social Security also received a number of letters in support of the Private Member's Bill introduced by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) which was debated on 31 January 1992.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of Kurdish asylum seekers who have arrived in the United Kingdom since 1988; what is the determination of their cases; and how many are still outstanding.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 20 May 1992]:* Information on the ethnic origin of asylum applicants is not recorded but in the period since January 1988 the majority of Turkish applicants, and a considerable proportion of Iraqi applicants, have stated that they are Kurds.

Information on these nationalities is given in tables A and B.

Table A: Applications[1,2] received for asylum in the United Kingdom by Turkish and Iraqi nationals, excluding dependants

	1988	*[3]1989*	*[3]1990*	*1991*	*January to April 1992*	*Total applications between January 1988 and April 1992*
Turkey	335	2,415	1,185	2,110	630	6,680
Iraq	165	215	890	915	315	2,500
Total	500	2,630	2,075	3,025	950	9,180

[1] Includes applications made in-country as well as at ports.
[2] Figures rounded to the nearest 5.
[3] Provisional and estimated figures.

Table B: Applications[1,2] received for asylum in the United Kingdom by Turkish and Iraqi nationals, excluding dependants, and decisions[1,2]; totals for the period 1 January 1988—30 April 1992

	Applications received	*Decisions[3,4]*						*Applications outstanding at 30 April 1992[1]*
		Granted asylum	*Granted exceptional leave*	*Refusals*			*Total decisions*	
				Refused asylum and exceptional leave[5]	*Refused under para 101 of Immigration Rules[5]*	*Total refused*		
Turkey	6,680	585	1,690	300	140	440	2,720	4,060
Iraq	2,500	200	595	55	5	60	855	2,015
Total Turkey and Iraq	9,180	790	2,285	355	150	500	3,575	6,075

[1] Includes applications made in-country as well as at ports.
[2] Provisional and estimated figures, rounded to the nearest 5.
[3] Recent figures may understate because of delays in recording.
[4] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made between 1 January 1988 and 30 April 1992.
[5] Includes refusals on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country and, up to 30 November 1991, refusals under paragraph 101 of the immigration rules for failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period.
[6] From 1 December 1991 only: see footnote (5).
[7] These figures are maxima which are likely to overstate the number outstanding because of earlier underrecording of decisions.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers have entered the United Kingdom from Somalia in each month since January 1989; and what is the determination of their cases.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 20 May 1992]:* Information for the period 1 January 1989 to 30 April 1992 is given in the table. For monthly figures of applications since January 1991 I refer the hon. Member to the replies given to the two questions from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 21 May at columns *210-13.*

Applications[1 2] received for asylum in the United Kingdom by Somali nationals, excluding dependants, and decisions[1 2]; totals for the period 1 January 1989 to 30 April 1992

	Number
Applications received	6,195
Decisions[3 4]	
Granted asylum	1,145
Granted exceptional leave	1,110
Refusals	
Refused asylum and exceptional leave[5]	85
Refused under para. 101 of immigration rules[6]	90
Total refused	175
Total decisions	2,430

[1] Includes applications made in-country as well as at ports.
[2] Provisional and estimated figures, rounded to the nearest 5.
[3] Recent figures may understate because of delays in recording.
[4] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made between 1 January 1989 and 30 April 1992.
[5] Includes refusals on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country and, up to 30 November 1991, refusals under paragraph 101 of the immigration rules for failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period.
[6] From 1 December 1991 only: see footnote[5].

Refugees

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the monthly refugee application figures for June 1991 to date and the determination of each applicant.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 20 May 1992]:* For monthly figures of applications since January 1991, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), on 21 May.

Information on decisions made in the second half of 1991 and first four months of 1992 on asylum applications, by nationality, is given in the table.

Decisions[1 2] in the period 1 July 1991 to 30 April 1992 on applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, by nationality
Provisional estimates of numbers of decisions on principal applicants

Nationality	*Granted asylum*	*Granted exceptional leave*	*Total refused*	*Refusals*			*Total decisions*
				Refused asylum and exceptional leave	*Refused on third country grounds*	*Refused under paragraph 101 of immigration rules[3]*	
Europe and Americas							
Bulgaria	—	*	25	15	—	10	25
Colombia	*	10	10	5	*	5	20
Romania	—	15	30	15	5	10	40
Turkey	105	180	240	65	35	140	520
USSR	5	15	5	5	—	—	25
Others	10	5	65	20	30	15	75
Total	120	220	370	125	70	180	710
Africa							
Angola	*	5	1,325	185	15	1,130	1,335
Congo	*	—	110	15	—	95	110
Ethiopia	15	150	65	5	10	50	235
Ghana	5	10	320	100	10	210	335
Nigeria	*	—	45	70	5	20	45
Somalia	20	740	125	5	35	90	890
Sudan	30	10	70	*	*	70	110
Togo/Ivory Coast	—	—	750	10	5	735	750
Uganda	5	35	120	30	5	80	160
Zaire	5	5	1,745	270	70	1,400	1,755
Others	*	15	1,345	45	10	1,290	1,360
Total	85	970	6,025	690	170	5,165	7,080
Middle East							
Iran	55	90	10	5	—	5	150
Iraq	60	125	20	5	10	5	205
Lebanon	10	60	25	10	5	5	95
Others	10	35	45	15	15	15	90
Total	135	310	100	40	30	30	540
Asia							
China	10	45	15	10	—	5	70
India	*	275	515	355	45	115	790
Pakistan	*	230	380	255	5	120	610

Nationality	Granted asylum	Granted exceptional leave	Total refused	Refusals: Refused asylum and exceptional leave	Refusals: Refused on third country grounds	Refusals: Refused under paragraph 101 of immigration rules[3]	Total decisions
Sri Lanka	20	475	25	10	5	10	520
Others	15	165	120	80	*	40	300
Total	40	1,190	1,050	710	55	290	2,285
Other nationalities and nationality not yet recorded	5	5	10	10	*	—	20
GRAND TOTAL	390	2,690	7,560	1,570	330	5,660	10,635

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest five with * = 1 or 2.
[2] Figures are provisional and are likely to understate because of delays in recording.
[3] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period. The figures are for the period from 1 December 1991 only: these refusals in July to November 1991 are included in the column "Refused asylum and exceptional leave".

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing Quotas

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with his Norwegian counterpart about arrangements for fishing quotas.

Mr. Curry: I met Mrs. Petterson, Minister of Fisheries, last year when I discussed a wide range of fisheries matters.

Negotiations between the Community and Norway on fishing quotas for the coming year will commence as usual in the autumn when the scientific advice becomes available.

Farm and Conservation Grants

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money was granted to farmers in England and Wales through the farm and conservation grant scheme—heather and woodland regeneration section—in 1990-91.

Mr. Curry: A total of £56,536.

Dolphins

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new initiatives he intends to introduce to protect dolphins.

Mr. Curry: In addition to strongly supporting the recent agreement under the Bonn convention for the conservation of small cetaceans in the North and Baltic seas, the introduction this year of a scheme for voluntary reporting of all incidental captures of marine mammals including cetaceans, the EC-wide limitation on drift net length from 1 June which we secured last year, continuing research on strandings and other aspects of small cetaceans, we are planning further research relevant to incidental capture.

Sea Defences

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how an individual member of the public may gain access to information held by the National Rivers Authority, concerning the state and condition of individual stretches of sea defence structures.

Mr. Curry: In the first instance, members of the public should approach the regional office of the National Rivers Authority for the area concerned.

For the Anglian region, which includes the coastal part of the hon. Member's constituency, the address is Kingfisher house, Goldhay way, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough PE2 02R.

Sunlight (Exposure)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields on 18 May, *Official Report*, column *26*, if he will consider distributing the Health Education Authority leaflet about exposure to the sun to the farming community.

Mr. Gummer: I have no plans to distribute the Health Education Authority leaflet, "Are you dying to get a suntan?", to the farming community.

Copies of the leaflet are held by health education units within district health authorities.

Clenbuterol

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what study has been made, and with what results, of the safety of feeding the drug clenbuterol to beef cattle; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Before any veterinary medicine can be marketed in the United Kingdom, it must first be licensed in accordance with the Medicines Act 1968. Licences are issued only after the Veterinary Products Committee (VPC)—an independent committee of scientists—has satisfied itself that the necessary standards of safety, quality and efficacy have been met. Clenbuterol is legally available in this country as the active ingredient of five prescription-only medicines, licensed for use in treating respiratory ailments in cattle and horses, and as an aid to cattle at the time of calving. These licences are currently being examined by the VPC as part of the ongoing review of veterinary pharmaceutical products.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current capacity of the incinerators in use for the disposal of BSE carcases in the United Kingdom on a weekly basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: In England and Wales there is at present enough capacity to incinerate around 1,000 carcases each week. We expect that existing facilities should continue to prove sufficient to incinerate all such carcases.

In Northern Ireland and Scotland, where the incidence of BSE is less, incineration capacity is more than sufficient to handle expected cases.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money has been paid out in compensation for BSE for each year since the compensation scheme was introduced; how much he is estimating will be paid out for each of the next five years; what is his basis for these estimates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The amount of BSE compensation paid each year since the scheme was introduced is:

	£ million
1988-89	1
1989-90	4
1990-91	10
1991-92	[1]18

[1] provisional

The nature of BSE, with its long incubation period, and the uncertainty of determining how many animals received sufficiently large infective doses before the ruminant feed ban to cause disease, makes the forecasting of expenditure very uncertain. Future trends will be reviewed in connection with the public expenditure survey discussions in the autumn.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Homes

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of houses owned by Scottish Homes and the number of these equipped with central heating.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total number of houses owned by Scottish Homes as at 1 May 1992 is 56,430 of which 37,315 are equipped with central heating.

Youth Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were participating in youth training in Scotland in each month since April 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is set out in the table.

	Number
1991	
April	37,065
May	35,797
June	37,213
July	36,285
August	36,714
September	36,865
October	36,749
November	36,912
December	36,744
1992	
January	37,842
February	38,045
March[1]	36,583

[1] Latest date for which figures are available.

Local Enterprise Companies

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the budget agreed with each local enterprise company for 1992-93, broken down into the five major expenditure blocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The allocation of resources to local enterprise companies is a matter for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairmen of the two bodies to write to the hon. Member.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what role the Scottish Environment Department has in promoting energy conservation and efficiency.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The main responsibility for promoting energy efficiency in Scotland rests with the Scottish Energy Efficiency Office which forms part of the Scottish Office industry department. The Scottish Office environment department is concerned with promoting energy conservation and efficiency in relation to housing. As an example of this, a total of £9·5 million in additional resources has been made available to Scottish local authorities over the years 1991-92 and 1992-93 to fund projects which demonstrate energy efficiency savings in local authority housing.

My right hon. Friend, by means of the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations, prescribes standards for buildings, including standards for energy conservation, which apply to all new buildings and alterations or conversions (other than those of a very minor nature). The Environmental Department is responsible for promoting these standards and the necessary legislation.

Fisheries

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his office has taken to promote Scotland as a fisheries-dependent region for the purposes of the post-1994 reformed funding structure of the common fisheries policy; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Officials in the Scottish Office have had regular discussions with the European Commission on fisheries dependent areas, within both the framework of the common fisheries policy mid-term review and the wider reforms of the structural funds. The Commission's proposals on this matter are at a very formative stage. Scotland has one of only seven pilot projects set up by the Commission within the European Community to look at issues such as retraining and alternative employment for fishermen. The project is centred on Macduff. The Commission has also set up a research study to identify fisheries dependent areas in Scotland, which is being carried out by the Sea Fish Industry Authority.

Disabled Facilities Grant

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department plans to announce the outcome of the recent review of the disabled facilities grant system; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* What are called disabled facilities grants in England and Wales are not applicable to Scotland. Improvement grants for adapting houses to meet the needs of disabled people have however been available in Scotland for many years. They have not been subject to recent review.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the December 1991 waiting list figures for Scottish hospitals; and if he will undertake to publish waiting list figures on a quarterly basis.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* We shall be moving to publishing waiting list figures on a quarterly basis starting with March 1992 figures.

Scottish Police College

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average daily rate per head which the Scottish Office allows to purchase food for police officers attending the Scottish police college either as recruits, senior officers attending courses or members of staff.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 20 May 1992]:* The Scottish office allows £2·19 per head to purchase food for police officers and staff at the Scottish police college.

Prisons

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average daily rate per head which the Scottish Office allows to purchase food for prisoners incarcerated at Her Majesty's prisons which are located in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 20 May 1992]:* The cost of food for prisoners is determined by the weekly ration sheet based on an approved dietary scale. On that basis the estimated average daily food cost per prisoner in Scotland is £1·26 for the current financial year.

Rent Officer Service

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish regular quarterly bulletins of statistics relating to the rent officer service in Scotland equivalent to those available from the Department of the Environment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* On the evidence available to me I do not think that the demand for this material is sufficient to justify a separate quarterly publication as suggested by the hon. Member. But I will look at the possibility of publishing key information in the departmental housing statistical bulletins.

Forestry Commission Land

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the details of the access agreements reached when the Forestry Commission disposes of its land, including the length of time of an agreement, and amounts that can be paid, and the eligibility of land for such agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* The arrangements for continued public access to land sold by the Forestry Commission are fully set out in the Forestry Commission's "Access Guidelines" issued last year. A copy was placed in the Library of the House at the end of September.

Bankruptcy and Insolvency

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the cost to date of the evaluation process of the Scottish bankruptcy system initiated in March 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* No specific figures are available for the cost of the evaluation process.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration the evaluation process initiated in March 1990 has given to the appropriateness of sponsorship by licensed insolvency practitioners of debt helplines or other such means of promulgating insolvency advice to the public.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* The sponsorship by insolvency practitioners of helplines is a matter for the ethical committees of the recognised professional bodies to consider. The evaluation of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 did not specifically cover this area.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in the evaluation exercise of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985, the procedures operative in other European countries and in the United States of America and Canada have been considered.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* In its review of bankruptcy and insolvency law in Scotland, the Scottish Law Commission considered the procedures operative in a number of other countries and took these into account in framing the recommendations which led to the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985. The Government's evaluation of that Act did not expressly consider practices in other countries.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state for each district council in each year since 1976 *(a)* the total number of local authority houses allocated to debtors, as defined by section 73(1) of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985, and spouses of debtors, *(b)* the total rent due by debtors or spouses of debtors, *(c)* the total rent written off or to be written off by local authorities in respect of debtors or spouses of debtors and *(d)* what specific allowance is taken of such rent arrears in computation of Government funding for local authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* Information relating to local authority house

allocations to debtors, as specified by section 73(1) of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985, and to the spouses of such debtors is not held centrally. Nor is information relating to outstanding rent arrears or rent arrears written off in respect of such debtors or the spouses of such debtors. While estimated local authority rent arrears written off as irrecoverable are included in estimated eligible expenditure for the purpose of determining the housing support grant payable to local authorities in any year, no separate estimate is made of the rent arrears written off in respect of such debtors or the spouses of such debtors.

Salmon

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his response to the application for producer organisation status with the extension rule submitted by the Scottish Salmon Growers Association.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* My officials have had discussions with representatives of the industry about the establishment of producer organisations for salmon but have not yet received a formal application for consideration.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the salmon farming industry about Crown Estate rentals; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* There have been no recent discussions about rental payments to the Crown Estate. Rents for salmon farms are being reviewed with effect from 1 January 1992. The Crown Estate's rental arrangements are subject to independent determination by the valuation office and I understand that further representations by the industry will be heard next month.

Shellfish

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional resources he is making available to local authorities to enable environmental health officers to undertake the classification of shellfish harvesting areas to meet the requirements of EC directive 91/492.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* Environmental health officers have not been asked to undertake the classification of shellfish harvesting areas. The exercise is being undertaken by my Department's marine laboratory in Aberdeen. The local authority role is limited to the collection of samples and their transmission to the marine laboratory.

Draft regulations for implementing this directive and that for the placing on the market of fishery products (EEC 91/493) will shortly issue for consultation. COSLA has indicated its intention to raise resource implications for local authorities arising from the tasks environmental health authorities will be expected to undertake under both directives. Any representations received will be given careful consideration. It should be borne in mind that substantial resources were provided to local authorities linked to the implementation of the Food Safety Act to which these directives are closely linked.

Sequestration

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will institute an inquiry into the demands placed upon resources of local government as a result of sequestrations in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has no plans to institute such an inquiry.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Packaging

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to reduce wasteful packaging in the retail industry; whether his Department is monitoring the progress of the German regulations relating to secondary packaging; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: Industry itself has already made good progress in reducing packaging waste—for example, by reducing the weight of packaging materials and using recycled material in new packaging; and a number of major companies have been actively involved with Government in supporting pilot resource recovery schemes. Ministerial colleagues regularly meet representatives of industry, including the retail sector, to discuss further ways in which packaging waste can be reduced. My Department and the Department of the Environment, have commissioned a study to establish whether economic instruments, such as taxes, levies, waste disposal charges and tradeable permits could help us achieve our recycling target. This is due to be completed later this year.

The Government are concerned about the potential for trade restrictions and distortions to competition which could arise as a result of the introduction of unilateral packaging measures in other member states and we have made our views known to the European Commission. The Commission has indicated that it is examining the situation and we have urged them to reach a speedy conclusion.

Financial Reporting Council

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements he has made for the financing of the Financial Reporting Council beyond the first three years of its life.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The next step is for the Financial Reporting Council to consider the amount and sources of its future funding. I understand that this will be discussed at its next meeting.

Auditing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to promote the role of internal auditors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: None.

Accounting Standards Board

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has plans to propose legislation under which the Accounting Standards Board will be required to hold all its meetings in the open.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Financial Reporting Review Panel

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any plans to investigate the operations of the Financial Reporting Review Panel.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. I know of no matters concerning the Financial Reporting Review Panel which would call for such inquiries.

Manufactured Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the deficit or surplus in *(a)* manufactured trade and *(b)* invisibles with (i) Japan, (ii) the USA and (iii) Germany, of (1) the United Kingdom, (2) France and (3) (except for (iii)) Germany in each year since 1990.

Mr. Nedham: Information on the balance of trade in manufactured goods is contained in the table. Information on the bilateral balances for invisible trade is not available.

United Kingdom, France and Germany's crude balance[1] of Trade in Manufactured Goods[2] with Japan, USA and Germany 1980-91

	United Kingdom		
Balance with:	Japan	USA	Germany
	US$ Millions		
1980	−2,758	−3,226	−4,623
1981	−3,322	−2,211	−4,292
1982	−3,581	−2,290	−5,826
1983	−4,024	−1,740	−7,475
1984	−3,906	−1,718	−6,809
1985	−4,130	−461	−7,420
1986	−5,739	1,577	−9,850
1987	−6,838	1,462	−12,237
1988	−8,762	−1,192	−15,428
1989	−8,258	−1,809	−15,770
1990	−7,702	−3,626	−13,607
1991	−8,359	−4,171	−6,938

	France		
Balance with:	Japan	USA	Germany
	US$ Millions		
1980	−1,786	−3,592	−5,101
1981	−1,855	−2,475	−5,366
1982	−2,103	−2,303	−6,984
1983	−1,790	−1,461	−5,219
1984	−1,869	146	−4,494
1985	−1,979	482	−4,863
1986	−3,259	−451	−7,649
1987	−4,101	−228	−10,024
1988	−4,970	−1,231	−11,472
1989	−5,093	−2,570	−11,925
1990	−6,052	−5,255	−10,983
1991	−3,444	−5,780	−7,099

	Germany	
Balance with:	Japan	USA
	US$ Millions	
1980	−3,578	2,602
1981	−3,708	2,598
1982	−3,153	3,674
1983	−3,647	4,923
1984	−4,034	8,041
1985	−4,441	10,126
1986	−7,082	15,041
1987	−8,274	16,373
1988	−8,810	12,606
1989	−9,051	8,064
1990	−9,720	9,375
1991	−10,939	2,965

Notes:
[1] Exports (fob) less imports (cif).
[2] Standard International Trade Classification Sections 5-8.
[3] Figures for 1991 include eastern Germany.
[4] provisional.
Based on the reported trade of the United Kingdom, France and Germany.
Source: United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics, EUROSTAT.

Hallmarking

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to continue the arrangement for the hallmarking of gold, silver and platinum articles by the established British Assay offices; and if he will make a statement on the European Commission's proposals on this.

Mr. Leigh: The Government is firmly of the view that the British hallmarking system is the best means of protecting both consumers and traders in the precious metals field. The Commission has indicated that it does not intend to put forward proposals for a harmonised precious metals regime at this stage. We will, however, seek to ensure in any future negotiations on a common system that the principles enshrined in the British hallmarking system are maintained.

Company Reports

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ensure that no company in Wales is prosecuted for a late submission of annual reports to Companies House, if they submitted such a report in the Welsh language within the appropriate time scale.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: New regulations are being introduced on 1 June this year which will enable private limited companies whose registered office is situated in Wales to deliver accounts in Welsh only.

If the Directors of Welsh private limited companies, who produce their accounts in Welsh, deliver them to the Registrar in an acceptable form and within the prescribed period, the question of prosecution does not arise.

Similarly, late filing penalties only apply to companies which deliver their accounts outside the prescribed period.

Directors (Accountability)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to ensure that directors of public companies should be more accountable to their shareholders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I welcome the work of the Accounting Standards Board in developing proposals for large companies to include with its annual report and accounts an operating and financial review. I look forward to the contribution of the Cadbury committee which is expected soon.

Cloth (Pentachlorophenol)

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce measures to ban the importation of cloth treated with pentachlorophenol.

Mr. Needham: The Government are conscious of the threat posed to the environment by the use of pentachlorophenols (PCPs) in textile production. However, I do not believe that it would be appropriate to ban imports of cloth treated in this way since there are at present no completely adequate substitutes for PCPs in protecting certain textiles from rotting. The detection of treated cloth at its port of entry would in any case be almost impossible. Nor are we generally able to discriminate against imports arriving from other member states of the European Community.

British Coal Pension Funds

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the present value of the pension funds held for emoployees of British Coal or their dependants; and if he will announce the arrangements to be made to protect both the benefits and the funds themselves following privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 20 May to the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans), *Official Report*, col. *156*. The present values of the pension funds are a matter for the trustees of those pension funds.

Nuclear Electric (Support)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what the total value of the support provided for Nuclear Electric has been since this business was formed.

Mr. Eggar: In each of 1990-91 and 1991-92 the nuclear industry received approximately £1·25 billion through the fossil fuel levy. The allocation of this income between Nuclear Electric plc, British Nuclear Fuels Limited and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority is commercially confidential.

Gas-fired Power Stations

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the working lifespan of a gas-fired power generating station constructed in 1992; and what steps he is taking to ensure that adequate supplies of gas at reasonable prices will be available throughout the period involved.

Mr. Eggar: The Government's aim is a competitive market within which the lifespan of individual power stations and the arrangements for fuelling them are matters for their operators.

In the Government's observations on the Fourth Report of the Energy Select Committee (Session 1989-90), "The Cost of Nuclear Power", (a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House) the lifetime of a combined cycle gas turbine power station was assumed to be between 20 and 40 years.

United Kingdom offshore gas reserves alone are sufficient to meet likely levels of United Kingdom demand for gas, including power generation, well beyond the turn of the century.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps are being taken towards the fulfilment of the undertaking to hold a creditors' meeting in connection with the BCCI liquidation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The joint liquidators of BCCI have informed my officials that they have set up a working party to consider how the difficulties of organising an effective meeting under section 141 of the Insolvency Act 1986 may be overcome. The joint liquidators have also indicated that the working party's preliminary report will be available shortly.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of meetings between his officials and the liquidators of BCCI on *(a)* the costs of the liquidation, and the breakdown of the costs and *(b)* the number of former customers of BCCI who have been placed into receivership by the liquidators.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The cost of the liquidation of BCCI are a matter for the court. The appointment of administrative receivers to companies who were former customers of BCCI is not a matter which requires reference to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received the copy sent to him of the letter to the liquidators from Messrs Zaiwalla concerning the liquidators' injunction against Mr. Masihur Raham, the former financial controller of BCCI; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The relevant parts of my Department have no record of the receipt of any such letter.

Coal Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the companies or individuals who have approached him about the privatisation of the coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: A number of companies and individuals have approached me about the privatisation of the coal industry including British Coal and the British Association of Colliery Management.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will make public details of all communications he receives from the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission on the safety consequences of coal privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: Yes.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he first consulted the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission about the safety consequences of coal privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: I wrote to the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission on 19 May formally to seek the commission's advice on the safety implications of coal privatisation.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consult the unions in the mining industry to seek their views on the safety consequences of the privatisation of the coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: I have already written to the coal industry trade unions seeking their views on all aspects of privatisation.

Dounreay

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will review the phase out strategy for the fast reactor programme at the nuclear power development establishment at Dounreay.

Mr. Eggar: The nuclear industry have made a proposal to extend the life of the prototype fast reactor at Dounreay by three years from the announced closure of March 1994 until March 1997. I am currently considering their proposal.

Dolphins

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy on the GATT panel conclusions on the United States embargoes on tuna caught by methods that are not dolphin-safe.

Mr. Needham: The European Commission is handling the matter within the GATT on behalf of the Community. The United Kingdom supports the Commission in urging the United States to adopt the findings of the GATT panel report on the United States tuna embargoes.

RECHAR

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what payments have been made to local authorities under the RECHAR scheme during 1992; and what further payments are expected to be made during this year.

Mr. Sainsbury: No payments have been made so far under the RECHAR programmes. The RECHAR programme monitoring committees will soon be able to meet consider applications for grants. Payments to local authorities and others, in respect of projects selected for grant, will follow in accordance with the normal structural funds procedures.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects RECHAR monies to be released to qualifying local authorities.

Mr. Sainsbury: The RECHAR programme monitoring committees will soon be able to meet to consider applications for grants. Payments to local authorities and others, in respect of projects selected for grant, will follow in accordance with the normal structural funds procedures.

Waste Paper

Mr. Paice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress his Department is making concerning the expected shortfall in supply of waste paper to United Kingdom mills.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 19 May 1992]:* We are not aware of an expected shortfall in the supply of waste paper to United Kingdom mills. Sourcing of raw materials is a matter for industry.

Trading Figures

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the trading figures between the United Kingdom and Liberia for each of the past five years; and what Export Credits Guarantee Department rating that country is given.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 20 May 1992]:* Figures for United Kingdom/Liberia trade for the last five years are:

£ million

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
United Kingdom exports	13·5	11·6	15·1	8·6	8·8
United Kingdom imports	7·3	9·5	12·7	13·2	0·9
Trade balance	+6·2	+2·1	+2·4	−4·6	+7·9

ECGD medium-term cover (ie for business on credit terms of two years or more) is not available for Liberia.

Export credit cover for short term business (ie generally on credit of up to 180 days) became the responsibility of the private sector in December 1991.

Companies (South African Interests)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations the Department of Trade and Industry has held on the future of the EC code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa *(a)* with other EC Governments and *(b)* others; what have been the results of those consultations; and what has been the policy of Her Majesty's Government in these consultations.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* In the light of the recent political changes in South Africa, the EC Presidency has initiated discussions on the future of the code of conduct and its reporting requirements. We are consulting the main reporting companies as part of this reassessment and will reach a view as to the Government's future policy in the light of this.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade why publication of the annual summary of United Kingdom companies' responses under the EC code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa has been delayed; and when it will be published.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* The normal timetable for the presentation to Parliament of this year's annual summary of United Kingdom companies' responses under the EC code of conduct was delayed because of the Dissolution of Parliament on 16 March. The summary will be presented soon.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy in respect of encouraging companies to respond to the EC code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa for the period ending 30 June.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* The Government have always encouraged companies to comply with the reporting requirements of the EC code of conduct, while recognising that compliance is voluntary.

North Korea

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the outcome of the recent visit to North Korea by the Secretary-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency's, in regard to the application of nuclear safeguards, pursuant to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* The International Atomic Energy Agency has made a report in the form of a press release on this visit. A copy of the press release has been placed in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training and youth training places were available in Barrow-in-Furness for each financial year since 1987; and what number will be available during 1992-93.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested.

At the end of 1991-92 financial year, there were approximately 3,600 young people on YT and 1,200 people on ET in the Cumbria TEC area, of which Barrow-in-Furness is a part.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of those completing employment training and youth training schemes in Barrow-in-Furness secured full-time employment in each of the years from 1987 onwards.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following table provides all the information available for Barrow-in-Furness and for the Cumbria TEC area which includes Barrow-in-Furness.

PQ 3211/1992

Per cent.

Leavers completing agreed training entering full-time employment[1]

	Employment training Cumbria	*Youth training scheme/ youth training Barrow-in-Furness*	*Cumbria*
1987-88	n/a[2]	n/a[4]	76
1988-89	n/a[3]	91	86
1989-90	n/a[4]	90	86
1990-91	43	n/a[5]	82
April—July 1991	29	n/a[5]	n/a[4]

[1] Including self-employment.
[2] Programme not operating.
[3] No follow-up survey of leavers in operation.
[4] Not available because of low number of responses.
[5] Information no longer available.

Sources: ET National follow up survey YTS/YT National follow up survey.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what additional training schemes in Barrow and Furness are being proposed by his Department for 1992-93 and 1993-94 to help those employees made redundant from VSEL secure new employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Cumbria training and enterprise council (TEC) is responsible for training in Barrow and Furness.

The chief executive of Cumbria TEC has already contacted the hon. Member to arrange a meeting at which he will brief the hon. Member on the efforts the TEC has made to create opportunities for the potential and present work force of Barrow.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each local enterprise company area in Scotland and for Scotland and Great Britain as a whole, for the year 1990-91, the total costs of provision of employment training, and the shares going to *(a)* trainees and *(b)* training providers.

Mr. McLoughlin: The total cost of employment training in 1990-91 was £1,076 million in Great Britain, of which £527 million was paid to trainees in allowances. It is not possible to identify separately the amounts paid to training providers.

Costs for 1990-91 cannot be identified separately for Scotland.

Local enterprise companies (LECS) did not become operational until 1 April 1991; therefore, expenditure information by LEC area for 1990-91 is not available.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* chairman and *(b)* directors of TECs have resigned since they were set up.

Mr. McLoughlin: There has been a turnover of 26 chairmen and 398 directors since TECs were set up.

Wages

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will provide a breakdown *(a)* by wages inspectorate division and *(b)* by wages councils, of establishments checked, and those found to be contravening wages council legislation in 1991, in the same format as the replies given on 14 March 1990, *Official Report*, columns *252-58*, and 24 April 1990, *Official Report*, columns *177-82*.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) today. The additional information is provided in the tables:

Table 1—Establishments found failing to post wages council notices—1991

Wages councils	*London*	*South East*	*East*	*South West*	*Mids*	*North West*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*North*	*Scotland*	*Great Britain*
Aerated waters	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Clothing manufacturing	38	2	2	6	68	22	10	5	5	158
Boot and shoe repairing	2	2	1	7	3	1	5	—	1	22
Button manufacturing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Coffin furniture and Cerement making	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0

Wages councils	London	South East	East	South West	Mids	North West	Yorkshire and Humberside	North	Scotland	Great Britain
Cotton waste reclamation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Flax and Hemp	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Fur	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
General waste materials reclamation	—	—	1	5	2	—	—	—	2	10
Hairdressing	101	56	38	59	75	86	54	78	79	626
Hat, cap and millinery	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	2
Lace finishing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Laundry	3	—	3	1	1	9	1	6	9	33
Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	4
Made-up textiles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Perambulator and invalid carriage	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	2
Retail bespoke tailoring	1	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	4
Rope, twine and net	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Sack and bag	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Toy manufacturing	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
Retail trades (non-food)	111	119	93	346	336	411	185	156	227	1,984
Retail food and allied trades	168	180	144	334	422	788	415	368	324	3,143
Licensed non-residential establishments	83	123	79	161	229	161	112	153	180	1,281
Licensed residential establishments and licensed restaurants	82	94	65	152	123	135	87	119	149	1,006
Unlicensed place of refreshment	83	53	47	112	89	87	65	46	76	658
Total	672	629	474	1,185	1,350	1,710	934	932	1,052	8,938

Table 2—Establishments found failing to keep adequate records of wages paid—1991

Wages councils	London	South East	East	South West	Mids	North West	Yorkshire and Humberside	North	Scotland	Great Britain
Aerated waters	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Clothing manufacturing	3	—	—	1	9	—	—	—	—	13
Boot and shoe repairing	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	2	—	4
Button manufacturing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Coffin furniture and Cerement making	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Cotton waste reclamation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Flax and Hemp	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Fur	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
General waste materials reclamation	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
Hairdressing	10	17	—	9	11	17	13	18	9	104
Hat, cap and millinery	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Lace finishing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Laundry	2	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	1	6
Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Made-up textiles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Perambulator and invalid carriage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Retail bespoke tailoring	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Rope, twine and net	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Sack and bag	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Toy manufacturing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Retail trades (non-food)	6	50	13	65	38	62	33	22	35	324
Retail food and allied trades	22	104	27	87	96	239	148	120	87	930
Licensed non-residential establishments	9	50	9	50	49	39	35	38	20	299
Licensed residential establishments and licensed restaurants	7	29	5	25	17	17	16	19	16	151
Unlicensed places of refreshment	14	22	4	28	14	22	14	9	14	141
Total	73	273	58	266	235	399	259	228	182	1,973

Table 3—Establishments found failing to keep adequate records of hours worked—1991

Wages councils	London	South East	East	South West	Mids	North West	Yorkshire and Humberside	North	Scotland	Great Britain
Aerated waters	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Clothing manufacturing	12	3	—	2	42	11	2	1	6	79
Boot and shoe repairing	2	1	2	2	2	1	8	2	1	21
Button manufacturing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Coffin furniture and Cerement making	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Cotton waste reclamation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Flax and Hemp	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Fur	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
General waste materials reclamation	—	1	1	—	—	—	1	—	2	5
Hairdressing	48	113	50	57	100	57	84	102	178	789
Hat, cap and millinery	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Lace finishing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Laundry	2	—	—	—	—	5	1	4	3	15
Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Made-up textiles	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Perambulator and invalid carriage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Retail bespoke tailoring	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	2
Rope, twine and net	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Sack and bag	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Toy manufacturing	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	3
Retail trades (non-food)	31	221	82	213	225	243	158	142	212	1,527
Retail food and allied trades	72	248	138	206	309	564	356	339	309	2,541
Licensed non-residential establishments	58	201	80	130	180	116	100	141	158	1,164
Licensed residential establishments and licensed restaurants	49	115	65	104	84	102	70	92	125	806
Unlicensed places of refreshment	36	60	40	57	52	60	45	33	54	437
Total	310	963	460	771	995	1,162	825	857	1,048	7,391

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will update the answer to the former hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, *Official Report*, 22 April 1991, column *366*, concerning wages councils.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is given in the tables.

Table 1—Establishments covered by wages councils on register at December 1991

Wages councils	London	South East	East	South West	Mids	North West	Yorkshire and Humberside	North	Scotland	Great Britain
Aerated waters	16	16	28	18	33	51	19	21	60	262
Clothing manufacturing	2,495	174	283	340	1,152	1,018	460	209	268	6,399
Boot and shoe repairing	513	238	258	297	389	434	616	89	159	2,993
Button manufacturing	16	4	4	4	12	4	3	—	—	47
Coffin furniture and Cerement making	2	—	—	3	6	4	5	—	1	21
Cotton waste reclamation	1	—	—	1	—	21	—	—	—	23
Flax and Hemp	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	8	10
Fur	113	6	5	5	7	23	4	1	23	187
General waste materials reclamation	118	83	97	165	213	291	231	97	124	1,419
Hairdressing	3,992	3,220	3,384	4,451	5,117	5,375	3,381	2,038	2,814	33,772
Hat, cap and millinery	17	3	44	8	9	19	11	11	2	124
Lace finishing	—	—	—	—	60	1	—	—	1	62
Laundry	193	274	85	131	220	74	51	32	135	1,195
Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods	3	1	3	4	10	100	9	—	3	133
Made-up textiles	30	11	33	33	36	39	47	21	31	281
Ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower	15	2	7	4	—	1	—	4	3	36
Perambulator and invalid carriage	3	2	3	2	9	4	6	1	—	30
Retail bespoke tailoring	170	44	53	44	34	54	36	12	32	479
Rope, twine and net	1	1	5	14	5	23	20	4	18	91
Sack and bag	6	—	6	6	13	16	9	3	4	63
Toy manufacturing	10	14	35	27	23	54	32	14	7	216
Retail trades (non-food)	18,093	12,671	11,254	14,575	22,123	14,481	9,393	4,974	8,934	116,498

Wages councils	London	South East	East	South West	Mids	North West	Yorkshire and Humberside	North	Scotland	Great Britain
Retail food and allied trades	11,786	13,172	11,609	14,658	15,759	16,631	10,443	7,413	10,608	112,079
Licensed non-residential establishments	5,662	6,204	6,592	10,273	13,634	9,451	6,618	4,205	5,584	68,223
Licensed residential establishments and licensed restaurants	4,679	4,213	3,755	7,397	3,480	3,502	2,159	1,499	3,905	34,589
Unlicensed place of refreshment	3,103	2,623	1,738	3,383	1,827	2,109	1,443	878	1,780	18,884
Total	51,037	42,976	39,281	55,844	64,171	53,780	34,996	21,527	34,504	398,116

Table 2
Establishments Checked and Underpayments Found in Wages Council Trades—1991

Wages Councils	Establishments checked by all methods	Percentage of register checked	Establishments checked by visit	Percentage of register checked by visit	Establishments found underpaying	Percentage of all establishments checked underpaying	Percentage of establishments visited underpaying
Aerated Waters	7	2·7	6	2·3	0	—	—
Clothing Manufacturing	402	6·3	367	5·7	97	24·1	26·4
Boot and Shoe Repairing	335	11·2	65	2·2	9	2·7	13·8
Button Manufacturing	2	4·3	2	4·3	1	50·0	50·0
Coffin Furniture and Cerement Making	1	4·8	1	4·8	0	—	—
Cotton Waste Reclamation	3	13·0	3	13·0	0	—	—
Flax and Hemp	0	—	0	—	0	—	—
Fur	6	3·2	6	3·2	1	16·7	16·7
General Waste Materials Reclamation	70	4·9	41	2·9	3	4·3	7·3
Hairdressing	2,730	8·1	1,889	5·6	368	13·5	19·5
Hat, Cap and Millinery	3	2·4	3	2·4	1	33·3	33·3
Lace Finishing	0	—	0	—	0	—	—
Laundry	74	6·2	66	5·5	19	25·7	28·8
Linen and Cotton Handkerchief and Household Goods and Linen Piece Goods	10	5·3	7	5·3	2	28·6	28·6
Made-up Textiles	8	2·8	8	2·8	1	12·5	12·5
Ostrich and Fancy Feather and Artificial Flower	3	8·3	3	8·3	1	33·3	33·3
Perambulator and Invalid Carriage	3	10·0	3	10·0	1	33·3	33·3
Retail Bespoke Tailoring	14	2·9	11	2·3	0	—	—
Rope, Twine and Net	4	4·4	4	4·4	1	25·0	25·0
Sack and Bag	2	3·2	2	3·2	0	—	—
Toy Manufacturing	15	6·9	15	6·9	6	40·0	40·0
Retail Trades (Non-Food)	9,542	8·2	4,129	3·5	1,336	14·0	32·4
Retail Food and Allied Trades	8,278	7·4	5,532	4·9	2,240	27·1	40·5
Licensed Non-Residential Establishments	5,819	8·5	3,114	4·6	916	15·7	29·4
Licensed Residential Establishments and Licensed Restaurants	3,084	9·4	2,045	6·4	578	17·8	26·2
Unlicensed Places of Refreshment	2,171	11·5	1,104	5·8	390	18·0	35·3
Total	32,586	8·2	18,426	4·7	5,971	18·3	32·4

Workers covered by wages councils and results of checks—1991

Wages councils	Number of workers (Est. 1988)	Total workers checked	Workers checked by visit	Workers found underpaid	Percentage underpaid of all workers checked	Arrears paid	Arrears not pursued at workers request	Arrears not pursued —other reasons	Total arrears assessed as due
Aerated Waters	5,500	161	153	0	—	—	—	—	—
Clothing Manufacturing	147,000	10,902	9,465	427	3·9	28,992	1,344	6,868	37,204
Boot and Shoe Repairing	5,000	663	146	12	1·8	913	0	0	913
Button Manufacturing	1,000	176	176	11	6·3	171	0	0	171
Coffin Furniture and Cerement Making	200	6	6	0	—	—	—	—	—
Cotton Waste Reclamation	300	26	26	0	—	—	—	—	—
Flax and Hemp	500	0	0	0	—	—	—	—	—
Fur	1,500	21	21	1	4·8	72	0	0	72
General Waste Materials Reclamation	13,000	725	404	11	1·5	4,060	0	0	4,060
Hairdressing	64,000	9,120	6,332	452	5·0	74,217	14,048	3,715	91,980
Hat, Cap and Millinery	4,000	58	58	2	3·4	238	0	0	238
Lace Finishing	900	0	0	0	—	—	—	—	—
Laundry	26,000	1,272	921	60	4·7	10,238	1,428	0	11,666
Linen and Cotton Handkerchief and Household Goods and Linen Piece Goods	2,500	144	137	6	4·2	108	0	0	108
Made-up Textiles	3,000	80	80	5	6·3	294	0	0	294
Ostrich and Fancy Feather and Artificial Flower	500	66	66	8	12·1	907	0	0	907
Perambulator and Invalid Carriage	2,000	116	116	5	4·3	355	0	0	355
Retail Bespoke Tailoring	4,000	36	28	0	—	—	—	—	—
Rope, Twine and Net	2,500	55	55	2	3·6	1,163	0	0	1,163
Sack and Bag	1,000	9	9	0	—	—	—	—	—
Toy Manufacturing	11,000	418	418	8	1·9	318	0	0	318
Retail Trades (Non-Food)	745,000	69,046	16,065	2,472	3·6	204,979	65,110	10,489	280,578
Retail Food and Allied Trades	465,000	80,828	21,187	4,699	5·8	416,788	163,269	19,698	599,755
Licensed Non-Residential Establishments	492,000	45,522	23,010	2,329	5·1	153,473	17,123	19,225	189,821
Licensed Residential Establishments and Licensed Restaurants	379,000	44,578	25,762	1,464	3·3	150,658	25,044	10,063	185,765
Unlicensed Place of Refreshment	96,000	22,282	6,523	838	3·8	67,547	12,690	3,831	84,068
Total	2,472,400	286,310	111,164	12,812	4·5	1115,491	300,056	73,889	1489,436

Table 4

Checks carried out and underpayments found in wages inspectorate divisions—1991

Divisions	Establishments checked by all methods	Percentage of register checked	Establishments checked by visit	Percentage of register checked by visit	Establishments found underpaying	Percentage of all establishments checked underpaying	Percentage of establishments visited underpaying
London	5,299	10·4	1,518	3·0	294	5·5	19·4
South East	3,333	7·8	1,369	3·2	413	12·4	30·2
Eastern	1,852	4·7	1,334	3·4	213	11·5	16·0
South West	5,193	9·3	2,519	4·5	893	17·2	35·5
Midlands	5,467	8·5	2,598	4·0	835	15·3	32·1
North West	3,129	5·8	2,602	4·8	1,083	34·6	41·6
Yorkshire and Humberside	2,708	7·7	1,777	5·1	792	29·2	44·6
Northern	2,543	11·8	2,133	9·9	711	28·0	33·3
Scotland	3,062	8·9	2,576	7·5	737	24·1	28·6
Great Britain	32,586	8·2	18,426	4·7	5,971	18·3	32·4

Note: From November 1991 the London, South East and Eastern Divisions have been merged to form the new Southern Division.

Table 5

Workers whose pay was checked in wages inspectorate divisions—1991

Divisions	Total workers checked	Workers whose pay was checked by visit	Workers found underpaid	Per cent. underpaid of all workers checked	Per cent. underpaid of workers checked by visit	Arrears paid	Arrears not pursued at workers request	Arrears not pursued for other reasons	Total arrears assessed as due
London	51,234	7,280	512	1·0	7·0	72,912	12,224	12,114	97,250
South East	35,343	7,994	765	2·2	9·6	60,201	19,256	4,400	83,857
Eastern	11,457	8,194	421	3·7	5·1	35,924	19,737	239	55,900

Divisions	Total workers checked	Workers whose pay was checked by visit	Workers found underpaid	Per cent. underpaid of all workers checked	Per cent. underpaid of workers checked by visit	Arrears paid	Arrears not pursued at workers request	Arrears not pursued for other reasons	Total arrears assessed as due
South West	78,144	14,483	1,752	2·2	12·1	152,021	54,577	20,737	227,335
Midlands	39,790	18,550	1,784	4·5	9·6	122,638	47,322	9,518	179,478
North West	14,536	12,803	2,303	15·8	18·0	257,641	54,685	10,030	322,356
Yorkshire and Humberside	18,223	9,788	1,639	9·0	16·7	133,872	35,156	5,161	174,189
Northern	14,808	12,907	1,790	12·1	13·9	134,311	26,124	4,635	165,070
Scotland	22,775	19,165	1,846	8·1	9·6	145,971	30,975	7,055	184,001
Great Britain	286,310	111,164	12,812	4·5	11·5	1,115,491	300,056	73,889	1,489,436

Note: From November 1991 the London, South East and Eastern divisions have been merged to form the new Southern division.

Table 6
Prosecutions for Underpayment

Divisions	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
London	3	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
South East	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	1	4	3	—
Eastern	—	1	1	2	1	1	—	1	—	2	—	—	—
South West	4	2	3	—	1	1	—	—	—	2	2	1	2
Midlands	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	1	—	—
North West	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	1
Yorkshire and Humberside	1	1	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	1	2	7
Northern	1	3	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2
Scotland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Great Britain	9	8	8	4	2	2	2	2	4	10	9	7	15

Note: From November 1991 the London, South East and Eastern Divisions have been merged to form the new Southern Division.

Table 7
Establishments found Underpaying 1979-85

Divisions	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
London (East)	431	495	440	391	441	324	298
London (West)	249	259	270	294	339	354	357
South East	521	769	749	764	871	703	670
Southern	585	576	450	441	494	475	556
Eastern	685	941	848	726	727	914	688
South West	1,010	1,201	1,070	954	1,078	1,033	929
Midlands (East)	634	771	623	532	573	534	430
Midlands (West)	605	674	598	666	543	552	712
North West (East)	946	879	613	648	704	560	529
North West (West)	1,115	1,060	688	652	865	886	804
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,156	1,119	871	964	941	1,026	818
Northern	893	902	736	552	630	721	815
Scotland (East)	710	687	529	515	525	480	488
Scotland (West)	597	750	556	349	389	365	361
Wales	832	1,071	1,033	891	722	534	609
Totals	10,969	12,154	10,074	9,269	9,842	9,461	9,064

Table 8
Establishments found to be underpaying 1986 to 1991

Divisions	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
London	608	270	317	229	172	294
South East	646	503	537	478	313	413
Eastern	974	405	462	432	271	213
South West	832	961	1,156	960	909	893
Midlands	943	525	747	822	749	835
North West	1,397	541	869	1,104	1,124	1,083
Yorkshire and Humberside	805	511	631	569	593	792
Northern	844	404	369	387	455	711
Scotland	656	323	509	547	619	737
Wales	500	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	8,205	4,443	5,597	5,528	5,205	5,971

Notes:
1. The statistics of underpayment have been separated into two tables because the divisional boundaries were changed in 1986.
2. From November 1991 the London, South East and Eastern Divisions have merged to form the new Southern Division.

Breach of Contract

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will use her power in section 131 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and confer jurisdiction on industrial tribunals to deal with claims for breach of contract.

Mr. McLoughlin: As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, when he was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment, announced on 22 October last year, the power in section 131 has proved inadequate and the Government propose to amend the relevant provisions at the earliest opportunity to enable appropriate jurisdiction to be conferred on industrial tribunals.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give the total expenditure by her Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if she will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Forsyth: The information requested is given in the table:

Year	*Expenditure (£ million)*
1986-87	1·080
1987-88	1·014
1988-89	3·185
1989-90	3·331
1990-91	3·507
1991-92	3·760
[1]1992-93	3·737

[1] (Budget).
Note: 1979-80 to 1985-86 = Not available.

Figures for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are for DE information division only. Figures for training agency information services branch are not available.

Figures for 1988-89 represent total expenditure incurred by DE information division and training agency information services branch. The two merged to form DE information branch in November 1989 and figures from 1989-90 onwards represent expenditure by DE information branch.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment has been made of the effect of deregulation of Sunday trading hours on shopworkers' rights to attend places of worship, and to spend Sundays with their families.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government have made clear their commitment to reform the Sunday trading laws and intends to honour this as soon as the question of the compatibility of the current law with European law is clear. The decision of the European Court of Justice, which is considering this matter, is expected in the autumn.

The position of shopworkers will, of course, be one of a number of issues to be taken into account when we consider how best to go forward on Sunday trading as a whole.

Electrical Equipment Certification Service

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent consultation has taken place with employees and their representatives regarding the future of the electrical equipment certification service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive are consulting employees and their representatives on a report, commissioned by the executive from independent consultants, on the future organisation and status of the Electrical Equipment Certification Service (EECS); the executive will form a view on any changes to the service in the light of these and other consultations.

Medicopharma UK

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether former employees of Medicopharma UK can expect to receive their company redundancy payments following the inquiry by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into the acquisition of the company by AAH Holdings plc.

Mr. McLoughlin: Statutory redundancy entitlements are the responsibility of the employer, unless he is insolvent or otherwise unable to make the payments. I understand that this employer intends to meet all claims.

National Vocational Qualifications

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions she has had with the National Council for Vocational Qualifications regarding the promotion of national vocational qualifications for young people; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The National Council for Vocational Qualifications has developed a communications strategy for national vocational qualifications which brings together all those involved, including the Government as appropriate. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have her first meeting with the chairman of the council, Sir Bryan Nicholson, next month.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Construction Industry Training Board in promoting national vocational qualifications; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am pleased to record that the Construction Industry Training Board has produced a wide range of occupational standards as a basis for national vocational qualifications. The board has agreed a comprehensive plan to promote the use of these qualifications both within the building and civil engineering sectors and with other employers.

Child Care

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how and when she proposes to introduce the grant for after-school child care; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government see out-of-school child care as being particularly important to working

mothers and have made a commitment to introduce a grant to be paid through TECs, to help set up out of school provision. A number of key issues have to be decided. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to discuss these with the women's issues working group, which she announced on 21 May. It is important that the provision is of good quality and meets the needs of both parents and children. We intend to introduce the grant as quickly as is consistent with that requirement.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 2 June 1992

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Attorney-General what percentage of the total work force in the Law Officers' departments is registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people in those departments; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Neither the legal secretariat to the Law Officers nor the Serious Fraud Office has any officers who are registered as disabled. Some 3·5 per cent. of the total work force in the Serious Fraud Office is composed of staff with disabilities who have chosen not to be registered.

In the Crown prosecution service 0·7 per cent. of established staff—5,318·5 staff as at 1 June 1991—were registered disabled. The CPS also employs staff with disabilities who are not registered, but the numbers are not readily available.

In the Treasury Solicitor's Department 2 per cent. of the established staff of 500 as at 1 June 1991 were registered disabled.

Each of the Law Officers' departments is an equal opportunities employer. Moreover, the CPS will shortly introduce a programme for action on the disabled which will include guidance and good practices on the recruitment and retention of disabled people.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Commonwealth of Independent States

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the total tonnage of all meat products despatched to each CIS republic separately from the United Kingdom under all aid programmes has been *(a)* delivered to warehouses in former CIS republics, *(b)* delivered to retail outlets ready for sale and *(c)* delivered to caring and educational institutions for free distribution.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Russia is the only CIS republic to have received meat products from the United Kingdom under an aid programme. Of the total of 5,200 tonnes of beef delivered, approximately one third went to meat processing factories, one third to retail outlets—supermarkets—and one third to special institutions—hospitals, schools and orphanages.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what moneys have been spent on providing know-how to persons residing permanently in the CIS on the subject of farm product and retail food distribution.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Food distribution is one of four priority areas identified for assistance under the Government's know-how fund for the former Soviet Union. In Russia alone we have already provided £1·022 million as technical assistance to support Feed Aid, food processing and distribution, plus about £1 million for a study of bread production in Moscow. A further £1·6 million has been earmarked for food-related projects and several further major food production and distribution proposals are currently under consideration.

In Ukraine, we have approved a £2·5 million food marketing and distribution project. Expenditure to date is £0·075 million. Also under way is a £0·460 million radioactivity food screening project, of which £0·1 million has been spent.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total tonnage of all meat products despatched to CIS states from the United Kingdom under all aid programmes in the last six months.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A total of 5,200 tonnes of beef were despatched to Russia from the United Kingdom under all aid programmes during the last six months. No deliveries were made to other CIS states.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many monitors from EC countries have been stationed in each of the former CIS republics, with the responsibility for monitoring meat distribution in each of the last six months.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: An EC task force of some 50 personnel from the member states has been based in Russia since the end of January, monitoring the transport and distribution of EC humanitarian food supplies. The United Kingdom has supplied six personnel at any time. In other states of the former Soviet Union, the Commission has arranged for European non-governmental organisations to monitor delivery and distribution.

Cambodia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the United Nations development programme about aid to Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The staff of the British mission in Phnom Penh and in the ODA's regional office in Bangkok are in regular contact with UNDP officials about aid priorities in Cambodia. We attend the regular donor co-ordination meetings convened by the UNDP in Phnom Penh to underpin the efforts of the UN aid co-ordinator, Mr. Bernander; we have welcomed the UNDP's role in providing technical support to the Supreme National Council; and through a seconded ODA official we have contributed to the UNDP's "Comprehensive Paper on Rehabilitation Needs of Cambodia". The UNDP is one of ODA's partners in co-financing a health planning project in Phnom Penh and other possibilities for co-operation have been discussed.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what assistance in personnel and aid has been given to Cambodia in each year since 1979; and what assistance is planned for the current year;

(2) if he will list the ODA personnel currently serving in Cambodia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The table shows disbursements of United Kingdom gross bilateral aid to Cambodia for the years 1979 to 1990.

Gross bilateral aid to Cambodia 1979-90 (£'000)

	Financial Aid (including debt relief)	*Technical co-operation*	*Total*
1979	703	—	703
1980	486	—	486
1981	110	—	110
1982	18	—	18
1983	693	—	693
1984	18	—	18
1985	18	—	18
1986	18	—	18
1987	18	—	18
1988	18	100	118
1989	18	283	302
1990	—	110	110

In addition, during this period £1·25 million was allocated to support programmes in Cambodia carried out by the United Nations Children Fund, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organisation; and nearly £15 million has been committed for assistance for refugees on the Thai-Cambodian border.

Firm expenditure figures are not yet available for 1991 and 1992, but, since the signing of the Paris peace accords in October 1991, the United Kingdom has granted an additional £750,000 to the World Food Programme for food pre-positioning for returnees and for the internally displaced; made payments of £2 million to the UNHCR in support of the repatriation programme; and has met a further £180,000 of the cost of bridge strengthening and provision along the repatriation route. Since January 1991 some £950,000 has been spent on the joint funding scheme in support of non-governmental organisations in Cambodia in the health, education, water supply and other priority sectors.

In the current financial year, further support for non-governmental organisations activity is planned and we are developing a significant programme of bilateral country assistance focused on health, water supply, English language training and some essential infrastructural improvements.

Between 1979 and the Paris peace accords, assistance with personnel was provided indirectly through our support for NGOs and the multilateral agencies.

Two permanent members of ODA's staff are currently on secondment in Cambodia. One is the deputy head of the British mission, with special responsibility for development matters. The other is ODA's senior health and population adviser. She is seconded to the World Health Organisation and is leading a health planning and management team in the Ministry of Health in Phnom Penh.

In addition, we expect more than 20 technical experts financed by the ODA to be undertaking short and long-term assignments in Cambodia during the course of this year in the fields of English language training, water use and development, inland fisheries, urban planning and support to small scale industry. We are also fully funding a repatriation adviser working with the International Federation of the Red Cross in support of the UNHCR repatriation effort.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with *(a)* the Government of Thailand and *(b)* the Governments of other countries about deforestation in Cambodia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under the co-ordination arrangements between donors, the United Kingdom's main focus in Cambodia is on health, water use and development, English language training, and bridge repair to assist repatriation. Forestry is not a sector of concentration for the United Kingdom in Cambodia. However, deforestation and other environmental dangers are critical issues for the development of Cambodia; and ODA officials in Phnom Penh have participated in discussions with the Supreme National Council and other country representatives, including Thai officials, at which these issues have been raised. We have urged EC officials to tackle forestry and environmental protection problems in the next tranche of EC assistance. We expect environmental concerns to play a prominent part in the forthcoming co-ordination meeting in Tokyo on 22 and 23 June at which the United Kingdom will be represented at ministerial level.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of health needs in Cambodia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Malaria is considered the major health problem in Cambodia, with some 500,000 cases per year resulting in between 5,000 and 10,000 deaths. Other serious problems are tuberculosis; diarrhoeal and other childhood communicable diseases; undernutrition and micronutrient deficiency; pregnancy-related problems; and trauma.

In the short term, the immediate needs are adequate supplies of potable water, food and essential medicines and equipment; a programme of child immunisation; and the transfer of basic health skills. In the longer term, it will be essential to rebuild and strengthen the health service system.

In response to these needs, the United Kingdom is co-funding the WHO's three year anti-malaria programme in-country; ODA has seconded a senior health and population adviser to a two-year WHO assignment in the Cambodian Ministry of Health; and assistance to the water sector is a priority in the United Kingdom bilateral programme to Cambodia.

Guatemala

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, United Nations agencies and the Overseas Development Administration bilaterally, separately provide to Guatemala.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Guatemala has been in non-accrual status—default with the World bank—since 1990 because of loan arrears. The Guatemalan Government have indicated their intention fully to clear their arrears to the bank, and discussions are in progress about this. Parallel discussions with the IMF on the possible use of resources under the IMF standby arrangement are continuing.

The various United Nations agencies operate different systems of financial control and it is not possible to provide reliable figures on an annual country basis.

There is no British bilateral aid programme at present. We have agreed to provide £22·5 million of grant aid for a joint infrastructure project, yet to be agreed, to support the development of full and normal relations between Belize and Guatemala. A total of £15 million will be spent in Guatemala.

Southern Africa (Drought)

Mr. Biffen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest assessment of the consequences of the drought in southern Africa; and what plans there are to provide further unilateral and multilateral British aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The most comprehensive assessment of the consequences of the drought is to be found in the appeal document just issued jointly by the United Nations and the Southern African development co-ordination conference—SADCC. This indicates that up to 130 million people may be affected, with cereal production at less than half the normal level and an import requirement of some 11·6 million tonnes. We have already pledged some £30 million in additional drought-related assistance and will continue to play a full and active part in the international response to the drought, including attendance by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development at a UN/SADCC conference in Geneva on 1 and 2 June.

Zimbabwe and Zambia

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by what means and through what agencies the expenditure of £5 million for Zimbabwe and £5 million for Zambia will be spent; and what restrictions have been applied to the use of these moneys respectively.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The additional balance of payments aid for Zambia and Zimbabwe, announced on 4 March and 29 April in response to the drought and totalling £10 million and 7·5 million respectively, is being made available by way of reimbursement of completed and satisfactorily documented fuel oil transactions subject to undertakings that equivalent sums will be allocated to purchase food or other drought-related goods.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to increase the amount of grant aid to Sri Lanka.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I stated in my written reply of 24 July 1991 to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), consideration of major new aid commitments to Sri Lanka was delayed following the expulsion of the British high commissioner last year. This policy remains under review.

Aid Budget

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set a timetable for Britain's overseas aid budget to reach the UN target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. The Government have stated on many occasions that, while they accept the target and are providing for real-terms increases in the aid programme, they are not prepared to set down a timetable.

Zaire

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of Zaire concerning human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Zairean Government are fully aware of the importance the United Kingdom attaches to human rights. Together with EC partners, we have made regular representations to the Zaireans on the internal political situation in Zaire, including the need for democratic reform and respect for human rights.

Sierra Leone

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of Sierra Leone concerning human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have stressed to Sierra Leone's National Provisional Ruling Council in Freetown the importance we attach to human rights, in particular that those detained following the coup be released or properly charged. We have also asked them to honour their commitment to return Sierra Leone to multiparty democracy as soon as possible.

Bangladesh

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response has been made by Her Majesty's Government to the appeal made in early April by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for donors to meet an increased requirement for $27·5 million to aid 150,000 additional refugees arrived in Bangladesh.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees appealed to the international community on 9 March 1992. The United Kingdom responded on 24 March with a contribution of £1 million, the largest single contribution made to this appeal. Our contribution via the EC amounts to about £50,000 and we have additionally responded to a Red Cross appeal with a further £200,000.

Tropical Rainforests

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to encourage a reduction in the deforestation of the tropical rainforests.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ODA has more than 200 forestry projects under way or in preparation, at a cost of over £158 million to the aid programme. We are working for a statement of principles on the sustainable management of the world's forests to be agreed at the UN conference on environment and development and a legally binding agreement thereafter. We take a leading role in promoting sustainable forest use in international fora such as the International Tropical Timber Organisation and the tropical forest action programme.

Kurdistan

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the Overseas Development Administration has directly spent on its own activities in Iraqi Kurdistan in the month of April; and what is the projected figure for May 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1991-92 we gave a total of £51·5 million for humanitarian relief to Iraq, of which £824,000 was provided in grants to British and Kurdish non-governmental organisations for relief work in northern Iraq. Some of this money is still being spent. Expenditure figures for April and May 1992 are not available. In May we provided a further £600,000 towards the cost of UN guards in Iraq.

RMS St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the tender documents for the new RMS St. Helena contract.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The tender documents are not expected to be issued before 5 June. A copy will be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those additional areas of policy which are to be subject to majority voting under the Maastricht treaty, setting out an explanatory memorandum in each case.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the detailed answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on 20 May to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

A memorandum analysing the provisions of the Maastricht treaty and their implications for the United Kingdom in the Community was submitted to the Foreign Affairs Committee enquiry into "Europe after Maastricht". This memorandum has been published by HMSO and is available in the Library of the House.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The details are as follows.

Total expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on press and public relations from 1983-84 to 1990-91, latest estimates for 1991-92 and budget provisions for 1992-93 are (£ million)

Year	Payments to Central Office of Information for overseas information material and related activities	Other information services	Running costs of Diplomatic Wing Information/ News Department	Running costs of ODA Wing Information Department	Costs of information staff at overseas posts	Total
1983-84	17·4	0·9	1·8	0·3	12·4	32·8
1984-85	18·8	0·8	1·4	0·3	12·8	34·1
1985-86	18·3	0·9	1·9	0·3	13·6	35·0
1986-87	18·7	0·7	1·9	0·2	14·6	36·1
1987-88	19·2	0·9	2·0	0·2	17·6	39·9
1988-89	18·3	0·9	1·8	0·3	17·5	38·8
1989-90	18·1	3·3	2·4	0·4	18·8	43·0
1990-91	15·7	5·8	3·6	0·4	23·2	48·7
1991-92	12·6	4·9	4·1	0·4	24·8	46·8
1992-93	9·3	6·9	4·3	0·4	25·9	46·8

Note;

Figures for the period before 1983-84 are not available on a comparable basis.

Thailand

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Thailand about human rights abuses there.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 22 May, at column *310*.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of the total work force in his Department are registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office employs 48 registered disabled persons—RDPs—with 24 in the diplomatic wing—1·1 per cent. of its home civil service payroll or 0·4 per cent. of its total work force—and 24 in the Overseas Development Administration, 1·9 per cent. of its total work force.

Recent steps to encourage the employment of disabled people include use of the disability logo; placing recruitment advertising in publications aimed specifically at people with disabilities; interviewing all RDPs who meet the sift criteria; establishing a budget for accommodation changes and the purchase of equipment; and giving disabled staff access to positive action and development training courses run specifically for people with disabilities.

Sea Levels

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what examination has been made of the susceptibility of United Kingdom protectorates in the southern hemisphere to sea level rises arising from global warming.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom has contributed to the work of the coastal zone management group of the intergovernmental panel on climate change which is undertaking studies on the vulnerability of small island and low-lying states to sea-level rise. The United Kingdom also contributes to the trust fund of the IPCC to enable developing countries to play a full part in this work.

In addition, the Overseas Development Administration has funded a preliminary study of the effects of sea level rise for the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. The results of this work were presented at the IPCC workshop on "The Rising Challenge of the Sea" held in Venezuela in March 1992.

Diplomatic Services

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which countries the United Kingdom provides diplomatic services for the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's Government have agreed to provide consular protection to Irish nationals in countries where the Republic of Ireland is not represented.

Croat and Bosnian Refugees

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Kingdom, alone or in conjunction with the other member states of the European Community, has or intends to provide assistance to Slovenia to assist it in dealing with the Croat and Bosnian refugees in Slovenia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom has since November 1991 given £3·3 million bilaterally and £6·4 million through the EC in humanitarian aid to the former Yugoslavia. This money has been allocated primarily to the International Committee of the Red Cross and to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for work in all the republics of the former Yugoslavia according to need.

Gulf Ecology

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters in regard to progress made in ecological restoration of the desert and the Gulf waters and shores were discussed during his recent visit to Kuwait to meet Ministers of the Gulf Co-operation Council.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No such discussions took place during my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' visit to Kuwait.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—A Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Mr. Goodlad: "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. Guidelines on purchasing by Government Departments already exist and are distributed by HM Treasury.

The Department of Employment has been undertaking a survey of the prompt payment record of Government Departments during the financial year 1991-92 and the results of this exercise will be published in the near future by the Department of Trade and Industry, which now has responsibility for small firms issues, including late payment. After studying these results the Department will consider what further measures, if any, may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by the public sector.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Goodlad: Government Departments, including their executive agencies, are required to pay their bills promptly. The timing of payment should normally be stipulated in Government contracts. Where there is no contractual provision or other understanding, Departments should pay within 30 days of receipt of goods/services or the presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment, whichever is the later. To help encourage prompt payment of bills by Government contractors to their sub-contractors, all Government contracts are to contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay its sub-contractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the sub-contractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards the strengthening of the inspection procedures in the nuclear non-proliferation treaty; and what would be the financial implications thereof.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: With European partners we put forward a list of proposed improvements to International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, including greater use of special inspections, in September 1991. We welcome the recent reaffirmation by the board of governors of the IAEA of the agency's right to conduct such inspections. Extending safegurds activities will have financial implications. Within the total provision for safeguards in the agency's draft budget for 1993-94 some 500,000 US dollars are allocated for a review and analysis of background information relevant to safeguards activities, including special inspections.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the actions that may be taken against a state that violates its obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under article XIIC of the IAEA statute, the IAEA board of governors is required to report any state which violates its safeguards obligations under the NPT to the Security Council and general assembly. It is then for the Security Council to decide on appropriate action—as it has done with Iraq. Should the state in question not take full corrective action within a reasonable time, the board of governors may curtail or suspend assistance being provided to it by the agency or by an IAEA member, and call for the return of materials and equipment. The agency may also suspend any non-complying member from the exercise of the privileges and rights of membership.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is the effect of article VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty with regard to the number of strategic nuclear warheads that the United Kingdom may deploy above the number presently deployed on Polaris;

(2) what are the implications for the United Kingdom's treaty obligations under article VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty of the deployment of a United Kingdom tactical air-to-surface missile;

(3) what are the impllications for the United Kingdom's treaty obligations under article VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to Her Majesty's Government's decision to raise the maximum level of warhead deployment of the strategic nuclear force with the introduction of the Trident missile system.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is the Government's policy to maintain the minimum nuclear capability necessary to ensure effective deterrence. This is consistent with the United Kingdom's obligations under article VI of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards a greater use of special inspection procedures under the existing terms of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have long advocated greater use of special inspections. With European partners, we put forward a list of proposed improvements to IAEA safeguards, including greater use of special inspections, in September 1991. We welcome the recent reaffirmation by the board of governors of the IAEA of the agency's right to conduct such inspections.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what status his Department accords the declarations of intent included in the preamble to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As a matter of law, the substantive articles of the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons are binding upon states parties. The declarations of intent contained in the preamble to the treaty are not, but reflect the long term aspirations of the signatories. The Government attach great importance to them.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is his Department's policy towards a conditional moratorium on underground nuclear tests;

(2) what are the implications for the United Kingdom's policy towards nuclear testing of France's decision to undertake a moratorium on all nuclear tests.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in a written answer on 12 May, at column *90*, we have a continuing requirement to sustain a minimum programme of nuclear tests to maintain the effectiveness and safety of our nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations his Department will make to the Russian Government to secure an extension of Russia's one-year moratorium on nuclear tests;

(2) what assessment he has made of the security implications for the United Kingdom of the Russian moratorium on nuclear tests.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Russia's nuclear testing requirements are a matter for the Russian Government. There are no immediate implications for United Kingdom policy.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards the conducting of an underground nuclear weapons test by any country other than those of the permanent five of the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our policy is to support the non-proliferation treaty, which is the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards the negotiations of a global ban on all sub-strategic nuclear weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our NATO allies believe a sub-strategic nuclear deterrent remains necessary to provide the essential link between conventional and strategic nuclear forces.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards the strengthening of the obligations imposed upon nuclear suppliers under the terms of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We exercise our supplier obligations under the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons through our membership of the Zangger committee. We were a founder member of this committee, provide its secretariat and play an active role in its work. We are a strong supporter of strict supplier controls and are also members of the nuclear suppliers' group. Last September we adopted a policy of full-scope safeguards as a condition of nuclear supply.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards banning all nuclear tests by all potential nuclear armed adversaries of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom remains committed to a comprehensive test ban—CTB—as a long-term goal. However, we have continuing requirement to sustain a minimum programme of nuclear tests, and problems of effectively verifying a CTB remain. Progress can therefore be made only on a step-by-step basis.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department will accept *(a)* a testing quota or *(b)* a lower threshold limit on the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons testing programme.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom's nuclear test programme is the minimum necessary to ensure the safety and effectiveness of our nuclear deterrent. Our requirements are kept under review.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Total expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on advertising and other promotional material for the years 1979-80 to 1991-92, and latest estimates for 1992-93 are:

	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	
	Diplomatic wing (£)	*Overseas Development Aid wing* (£)
1979-80	100,266	214,739
1980-81	116,532	145,697
1981-82	162,998	207,964
1982-83	229,711	135,506
1983-84	205,247	252,691
1984-85	149,932	234,050
1985-86	160,535	271,084
1986-87	335,754	228,347
1987-88	195,000	351,000
1988-89	289,184	689,631
1989-90	395,842	1,066,447
1990-91	926,610	902,000
1991-92	755,000	1,031,000
1992-93	754,000	1,057,000

These figures cannot be disaggregated to identify the medium used without incurring disproportionate cost.

Medjugorje

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Serbian Government about the bombing of Medjugorje; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We supported UN Resolution 752 which demanded that all concerned should stop the fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina immediately.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has made to the Croatian Government following attacks against the withdrawing Yugoslav Federal Army on 20 and 21 May; if he will seek assurances that Croatian forces will allow the Yugoslav Federal Army to retire to Serbia unmolested; and what guarantee he will require from the Croatian Government for the remaining Serbian population of Croatia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We deplore all acts of violence in Croatia, particularly those which contravene agreements with the UN. It is an essential part of the agreement covering the deployment of the UN protection force that the JNA should withdraw from the protected areas. We are scrutinising the new legislation passed on 8 May to ascertain whether it provides the necessary guarantees for minorities.

Cyprus

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Turkish Cypriots have been consulted about the application of Cyprus to join the European Community; whether the Turkish Cypriots support this application; and whether the United Kingdom supports this application.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Council of Ministers referred the application to the Commission for opinion in September 1990. We understand that Commission officials will consult acknowledged leaders of the Turkish Cypriot community. We will study the Commission's opinion carefully before reaching conclusions.

Bosnia

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government will make to the Bosnian Government regarding the drafting of a new constitution and specifically on the future right of secession and self-determination.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We strongly support the efforts of Lord Carrington and Ambassador Cutileiro to draw up constitutional arrangements acceptable to all parties. We look forward to the speedy resumption of these talks.

Croatia

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government are making to the Croatian Government regarding the recruitment of British mercenaries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have seen media reports that British citizens are fighting as mercenaries in Croatia. We deplore any foreign encouragement of this tragic conflict.

European Union

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in respect to the proposed amendments to the treaty of Rome proposed in title II of the treaty on European union, he will place in the Library a document showing for each of the current articles proposed to be amended, using distinctive type and deletion marks respectively, the changes proposed to each relevant article.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Title II of the treaty on European union, when read against the treaty of Rome, makes clear

how the latter treaty is to be amended: new articles are to be "inserted", certain articles are to be "repealed" and articles which are to be amended are "replaced" by new versions of the existing articles. The last category contains all the amendments to which the hon. Member refers. As was explained by my right hon. Friend in a letter to the hon. Member on 18 May, the Government do not intend to publish a consolidated version of the treaty of Rome as amended by the treaty on European union prior to the latter's entry into force. A copy of the letter was placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify those other provisions of the treaty on European union, in the Cm. 1934 version, other than titles II, III and IV, which relate to those titles.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The question raised by the hon. Member is covered in the notes on clauses relating to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill which are available in the Vote Office.

British Embassies

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those British embassies which have desk-top communications for *(a)* their own purposes and *(b)* commercial and trade purposes.

Mr. Goodlad: Of the 230 British overseas posts where there are resident United Kingdom-based staff, all but 15 have computer systems which can be used both for their own internal purposes and to store and process commercial and trade data.

Diplomatic Services

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which countries the United Kingdom provides diplomatic services for other European Community nations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under an informal arrangement made in 1985, the diplomatic missions of European Community member states may provide consular assistance to unrepresented EC nationals in non-Community countries.

Dependent Territories

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the performance monitoring organisations used by United Kingdom dependent territories to monitor the performance of their equity investment advisers and the performance of their equity investment.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Responsibility for monitoring the performance of the investments and investments advisers of the United Kingdom's dependent territories rests with the Minister of Finance, or equivalent official, of each territory. These investments are also subject to scrutiny by an officer responsible for the public audit of each territory, and by the legislature or equivalent body, as appropriate.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a league table showing the percentage increase or decrease of each of the dependent territories' equity investments over the last five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This information is not centrally recorded. It would incur a disproportionate cost to collate it.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all recipients of licences to fish within the 12-mile limit off St. Helena.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All recipients of licences are local St. Helena boat owners. Twenty-seven licences have been issued in 1992 of which 18 are for full-time fishing, five for occasional fishing and four for sport.

I shall write shortly to the hon. Member with a full list of the holders of the licences.

ENVIRONMENT

Private Lettings

Mr. Raymford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give further details of the nature of the proposed rent-a-room scheme and his estimate of the number of new lettings which might be brought into existence through this scheme in a full year.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce more tax advantages for private lettings.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

The Conservative election manifesto included an undertaking to introduce a new 'rent a room' scheme under which home owners will be able to let rooms to lodgers without having to pay tax on the rent they receive. This matter is under consideration.

Marsham Street Premises

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state, or give reference to any document describing, the full reasons why it is considered the best value for money to demolish the Government premises in Marsham street; what was the date of their completion; and what necessary work, and approximate cost, would be required to render them fit for office reoccupation.

Mr. Howard: The Government building at 2 Marsham street, which was first occupied in 1970, is in need of major repair. Because of the scale of necessary remedial work, a wide range of alternative options was reviewed, based on advice from Arup Associates. The options ranged from immediate repairs, through various levels of refurbishment to demolition. Demolition proved to be the best value for money, when the overall costs of each option were compared.

The repair option with the lowest initial cost consisted primarily of remedial work to concrete, replacement of windows and decoration of affected areas. It would involve a substantial programme of decanting staff for several years and would cost about £50 million, over and above routine maintenance and running costs. This would do no

more than keep the building going. Similar expenditure and further decanting would be required within 10 years to replace obsolete services and carry out further concrete repairs. Upgrading the building to allow greater use of modern office technology, more efficient energy consumption and better use of space would be more expensive still.

Ozone-depleting Chemicals

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the international meeting of Government experts held in Geneva during April on strategies to accelerate the phase out of ozone-depleting chemicals.

Mr. Maclean: This meeting provided the opportunity for parties to the Montreal protocol to propose changes to the protocol which might be agreed at the fourth meeting of the parties, to be held in November in Copenhagen. Proposals put forward included those from the EC, on which the Government provided explanatory memorandum 5162/92 on 21 May 1992. Substantive discussion of the various changes proposed will take place at the next meeting, to be held next month in Geneva.

Housing Associations

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing his estimate of the percentage of the net income of housing association tenants which would on average be taken by their rent, broken down on a regional basis in each of the years from 1979 to 1991.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not compile this information.

Information is, however, available from the National Federation of Housing Associations. The NFHA collects information relating to new housing association tenancies, and has published regional data on weekly rent as a percentage of weekly income in its CORE quarterly bulletin since the end of 1989.

The relevant copies of the bulletin are in the House of Commons Library.

London Docklands

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table indicating, for each year since 1981, at current prices, the amount of money the Government have provided for all private investors in London docklands, in terms of *(a)* direct subsidies, *(b)* tax allowances, *(c)* rates relief and *(d)* discounted land sales.

Mr. Redwood: Figures relating to direct subsidies *(a)* and to rate relief *(c)* are as follows:

£ thousands

	(a) Direct subsidies	*(c) Rate relief*
1981-82	215	—
1982-83	351	2,091
1983-84	304	2,401
1984-85	324	3,587
1985-86	600	3,353
1986-87	739	4,186
1987-88	493	8,562
1988-89	199	9,596
1989-90	263	15,018
1990-91	216	[1]—
1991-92	221	[1]—

[1] Not available.

(a) Direct subsidies—Financial assistance by the Corporation for industry in Docklands, including relocation and modernisation grants;

(b) Tax allowances—Data is not available for capital allowances paid in respect of individual Enterprise Zones, such as the Isle of Dogs;

(c) Rate relief—Reimbursement for local authorities in Enterprise Zones for loss of rates revenue;

(d) Discounted land sales—The London Docklands Development Corporation is expected to achieve market price for land disposals.

London Docklands

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what study he has made of the costs and benefits of moving substantial elements of his and other Departments' operations to docklands; and if he will publish details of its findings.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* Following the decision announced on 6 February to demolish the headquarters building of my Department at 2 Marsham Street, my predecessor asked officials to draw up proposals for moving a substantial number of this Department's HQ posts away from central Westminster to another London location. In particular, he said that he was considering establishing a substantial departmental presence in docklands. An analysis of the properties available and the overall market position indicates that in terms of cost, quality and suitability docklands currently offers the best option. Further work is in hand.

I have made no analysis of any relocation proposals of other Departments.

Poisons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the proposal by the European Commission that poisonous materials on the green list of wastes for recovery prepared by the OECD should not be regulated by Community law.

Mr. Maclean: Green list wastes do not exhibit any of the hazardous characteristics listed in OECD Council decision C(88)90(final). Under Community law all waste recovery must be carried out at an authorised facility. Movements of green list wastes within OECD are subject to normal commercial controls. The Government consider that any general imposition of additional controls on movements of such wastes outside OECD would be a discriminatory measure in breach of our international obligations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Housing

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table setting out the average rent level, region by region, for housing association lettings in each of the years from 1979 to 1991, identifying assured tenancy rents separately from the fair

rents from 1989 onwards and indicating the annual percentage increase in rents in each year by comparison with the retail price index.

Mr. Baldry: Complete information on housing association rents is not available in the form requested. The following statistics show fair rents registered for housing association tenants in the years 1981 to 1991, and assured tenancy rents for new lettings made in 1990 and 1991. As registered fair rents are fixed for two years the changes between the annual averages below are not comparable with the increases in the RPI.

Housing Association unfurnished tenancies: average fair rents registered[1]

£/week including service charges

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Northern	11·09	13·86	15·09	17·83	17·74	20·48	20·40	23·06	23·12	26·85	28·71
Yorkshire and Humberside	13·83	15·27	16·68	17·80	18·75	20·60	21·81	23·75	25·77	29·10	31·63
East Midlands	15·03	16·60	17·77	19·37	20·20	22·21	23·37	25·50	26·56	30·13	32·08
East Anglia	15·25	15·91	17·72	18·68	20·51	21·57	23·29	25·25	27·40	29·12	33·73
Greater London	14·63	15·98	17·67	19·44	20·76	22·25	24·62	26·35	28·96	32·23	35·94
Rest of South East	16·98	18·35	20·48	21·32	23·53	25·12	26·77	28·97	30·90	34·85	38·10
South West	15·73	17·07	19·07	20·40	22·17	24·10	26·33	28·63	32·00	36·06	39·88
West Midlands	14·19	15·00	16·72	17·52	18·76	20·02	21·35	23·35	24·92	27·73	30·37
North West	12·03	13·35	14·80	16·06	16·79	18·48	19·48	21·34	22·79	24·75	26·50
RPI: annual increase per cent.	12	9	5	5	6	3	4	5	8	9	6

[1] The regional averages are for fair rents registered during the calender year and as rents are normally only registered every two years they do not reflect the average for all tenancies in existence during that year

Source: Rent Officers' Survey.

Housing association assured tenancies: average rent for lettings made in the year

	£/week including service charges		
	1990	*1991*	*Percentage increase*
Northern	31·50	34·00	8
Yorkshire and Humberside	31·50	36·50	16
East Midlands	34·00	37·50	10
East Anglia	33·50	36·50	9
Greater London	37·00	43·50	18
Rest of South East	37·00	42·00	14
South West	37·50	43·00	15
West Midlands	33·00	38·00	15
North West	31·00	34·50	11

Source: National Federation of Housing Associations.

Woodlands

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about changes affecting the area of ancient semi-natural woodland since 1962.

Mr. Maclean: Details of changes since 1962 are not available. However, the former Nature Conservancy Council's—now English Nature's—ancient woodland inventory shows that in England and Wales, of the area of ancient woodland present in 1930, 38 per cent. has been replaced by plantations usually of non-native species and 7 per cent. has been cleared for other land uses. The Government's broadleaves policy, the changes to the criteria for felling licences, introduced in 1984 and 1985 and the more recent woodland management scheme have resulted in a marked reduction in the rate of change.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it part of his planning policy to prevent any further loss of ancient semi-natural woodland.

Mr. Maclean: The felling of woodland is not a development under the town and country planning system. The protection of ancient woodland will however be a material consideration in preparing development plans and determining planning applications. Felling which is undertaken other than for development purposes is effectively controlled through the felling licence system administered by the Forestry Commission. Sites of special scientific interest which may include ancient woodland are given particular protection and development in or near them is strictly controlled.

Housing Repossessions

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, columns *238-39*, what statistical information is available to support his expectation that the number of repossessions will reduce in 1992.

Mr. Baldry: A number of building societies have reported reductions in the numbers of repossessions this year and figures published by the Lord Chancellor's Department show a decline in the number of court actions entered for possession in England and Wales, in the first quarter of 1992.

Urban Programme

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funds have been allotted to the Yorkshire-Humberside area this year, last year and the previous year for urban programme fund projects.

Mr. Robin Squire: Total urban programme resources allocated to local authorities in the Yorkshire Humberside region this year, last year and the previous year are as follows:

	£ million
1990-91	[1]30·291
1991-92	[1]34·207
1992-93	28·009

[1] included supplementary allocations of £2·18 million in 1990-91 and £4·75 million in 1991-92 for special projects in Sheffield.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the establishment of the urban regeneration agency will be achieved without any reduction in moneys at present allotted to the urban programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: The responsibilities of the URA have yet to be finalised, but I do not expect its establishment to affect future financial provision for the urban programme.

Conservation Areas

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his programme for the establishment of special areas for conservation.

Mr. Maclean: The EC habitats directive sets out the programme for establishing special areas of conservation for all member states. It requires each member state to prepare a national list within three years of the notification of the directive. Within six years of notification, the Commission, in agreement with each member state, shall establish a draft list of sites of Community importance drawn from the national lists. Once a site has been adopted as a site of Community importance, the member state concerned has a maximum of six years thereafter to effect its designation as a special area of conservation. I shall ensure that the United Kingdom complies with this programme.

Caravan Sites Act 1968

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what organisations he intends to consult in his review of the Caravan Sites Act 1968; and whether individuals will be offered the opportunity of contributing to the review;

(2) what will be the terms of reference, membership and composition of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 review team;

(3) when the review of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 will be completed.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have in hand a review of the operation of the Caravan Sites Act 1968, with the aim of reducing the nuisance of illegal encampments. We hope to issue shortly a public consultation paper containing our proposals for reform; and comments from individuals will be welcome.

Packaging Waste

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek from the EC Commission a statement of the evidence for the assertion in the draft packaging directive that packaging waste contributes in a great proportion to the increase in the volume of wastes and to the saturation of landfills.

Mr. Maclean: The Commission has not yet produced a proposal for a directive, so it would be premature to comment at this stage on the possible contents.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the extent to which packaging waste as a proportion of household waste has changed over the last five years.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the extent to which packaging contributes to household waste has been collected only in a few recent studies. There is therefore insufficient data on which to assess changes over a period of time.

The national household waste analysis project, currently being undertaken by Warren Spring laboratory and Aspinwalls on behalf of my Department, has been set up to provide better and more detailed information on the composition of household waste. The first results should be available later this year.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Howard: The following surveys, carried out by my Department since 1 November 1991, include questions to individuals about their opinions:

Monitoring the new local authority performance regime.

Housing Attitudes Survey.

English House Conditions Survey: Interview survey of Householders.

Surveys on the housing needs of elderly people:

(a) Survey of residents of special needs housing.

(b) Survey of elderly people on waiting lists for special needs housing.

(c) Housing needs of non-elderly, disabled people in the community.

Ventilation in new homes.

Householders' response to Radon in the home.

Energy Efficiency Campaign—Creative Development Research [Stage 3] (jointly sponsored with the Department of Energy).

Energy Efficiency Campaign Evaluation (jointly sponsored with the Department of Energy).

Waste

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the collection of data on waste within the EC during his presidency of the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Maclean: Work is already in hand to improve the collection of data on waste within the EC, and we will ensure the work continues under our presidency.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he monitors the reliability of information provided by persons acting as holders of non ferrous waste requiring disposal, when making declarations for waste covered by article 17 of EC directive 84/631/EEC.

Mr. Maclean: Monitoring and enforcement of the procedure in article 17 for consignments of hazardous waste containing non-ferrous metals for recycling is a matter for the waste disposal authorities.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that producers of recycleable waste, or their agents, provide waste regulation authorities with information relating to the quantity of waste requiring disposal by reclamation.

Mr. Maclean: Section 49 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires waste collection authorities to prepare a recycling plan. In doing so each council has a duty to investigate what recycling arrangements are appropriate for dealing with household and commercial waste arising in its area and it must include information as to the kinds and quantities of waste that it expects to deal

with in that way. The draft plans must be submitted to my right hon. and learned Friend for approval; he has asked for them all to be with him by 1 August. Once a council has determined the content of the plan it is under a duty to sent a copy, and any subsequent modification of it, to the waste regulation authority for the area.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend the powers of waste regulation authorities giving them rights *(a)* to require information about the composition of waste and the processes which produce it and *(b)* to verify the information.

Mr. Maclean: Powers already exist in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Control of Pollution Act 1974 for these purposes insofar as they are necessary for environmental protection.

Section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act requires all holders of waste to ensure that, on the transfer of the waste, a description of it is also transferred. Such a description must be sufficient to enable subsequent holders to manage the waste safely and legally, and will contain information about the processes producing the waste where such information is necessary to that end. Under the Environmental Protection (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991, made under section 34, waste regulation authorities have powers to require waste holders to produce copies of such descriptions.

The onus to ensure that descriptions are correct and adequate rests on the parties to transfers of waste; authorities are not charged with the verification of waste descriptions. Waste disposal authorities are responsible for the supervision of activities at licensed waste disposal sites under section 9 of the Control of Pollution Act. Authorities may set licence conditions requiring the keeping of records and have powers under section 91 of that Act to enter, inspect and take samples of any waste at licensed sites.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will amend current regulations governing the importation and transportation of waste to ensure that regulatory authorities receiving the waste are fully aware of the companies and countries from which the waste is being transferred;

(2) what action he will take to ensure that adequate information about the harmful and hazardous nature of waste material is made available to regulatory authorities;

(3) if he will introduce a legal requirement for regulatory authorities to receive pre-notification of the precise time of departure and arrival of waste imported for recycling and disposal.

Mr. Maclean: Negotiations are in progress on an EC regulation, to replace the current regulations, on the supervision and control of shipments of waste within, into and out of the Community. The current draft of this proposal would require information on the source, composition and the producer of the waste proposed for shipment to be notified to the competent authorities. These authorities would also receive advance notification of the date of shipment of waste for recycling and disposal.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation controlling the imports of toxic and hazardous wastes along the lines of the United States Waste Export and Import Prohibition Act (HR G2580).

Mr. Maclean: No. This Bill, which is not a United States Government measure, would prevent all transfrontier movements of waste, except pre-sorted textile rags, glass and paper wastes for recovery. The United Kingdom is looking to the draft EC waste shipments regulation to improve existing controls on movements of waste. This will include appropriate controls on wastes destined for recovery, implementing a recent decision by the OECD on this subject, which will also be implemented by the United States of America.

World Climate

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to press for international targets, timetables and penalties to ensure that the world climate is protected from made-made environmental pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The climate change convention adopted on 9 May sets as its objective the stabilisation of greenhouse gases concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate. As a first step towards this objective, the convention also sets targets and timetables for greenhouse gas emiesions which all developed countries will aim to achieve.

Council House Sales

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to enable the receipts from the sales of council houses to be applied into the new building programmes for housing to rent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities must set aside part of their capital receipts as provision for repaying debt. This remains a sensible and prudent requirement. It also enables a greater amount of new credit approvals to be issued to those local authorities where housing needs are greatest or where the resources will be put to best use.

The provision of new social housing is now mainly the responsibility of housing associations.

Fire Safety

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will amend the building regulations to impose a requirement in respect of sealed double glazing units that one pane is capable of opening sufficiently to permit persons to escape in circumstances where no other secondary means of escape from fire exist.

Mr. Baldry: There are no plans to amend the building regulations along the lines suggested.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, in order of magnitude, the central funding grant per adult towards the cost of local services paid out to each of the London boroughs in 1991-92; and what is proposed for 1992-93.

Mr. Redwood: The table shows the total external support, expressed in pounds per adult, received by each London borough in 1991-92 and 1992-93. The boroughs are listed in ascending order by the amount of support

recieved in 1991-92. Total external support consists of revenue support grant, redistributed non-domestic rates and, for some authorities, area protection grant and ILEA grant, following the abolition of the Inner London education authority.

Local authority	*1991-92 (£/adult)*	*1992-93 (£/adult)*
City of London	11,466	12,528
Tower Hamlets	1,862	2,138
Hackney	1,755	2,080
Lambeth	1,557	1,628
Southwark	1,427	1,607
Islington	1,392	1,687
Westminster	1,385	1,638
Newham	1,308	1,612
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,261	1,465
Lewisham	1,260	1,466
Camden	1,238	1,413
Greenwich	1,227	1,433
Wandsworth	1,192	1,424
Haringey	1,133	1,316
Brent	1,128	1,435
Kensington and Chelsea	1,000	1,251
Waltham Forest	998	1,231
Ealing	975	1,200
Barking and Dagenham	846	1,055
Hounslow	799	1,063
Enfield	754	1,002
Croydon	739	972
Redbridge	702	944
Harrow	695	913
Hillingdon	686	869
Kingston upon Thames	673	880
Barnet	670	951
Merton	654	881
Bexley	635	848
Sutton	634	832
Havering	583	804
Bromley	543	755
Richmond upon Thames	529	752

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will show for each local authority for the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92 *(a)* their standard spending assessment relating to capital charges, *(b)* their actual expenditure relating to this item and *(c)* the difference between *(a)* and *(b)*, showing totals for each column for England as a whole;

(2) if he will show for each local authority for the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92 *(a)* their standard spending assessment relating to the other services block, *(b)* their actual expenditure relating to this item and *(c)* the difference between *(a)* and *(b)*, showing totals for each column for England as a whole.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 13 May 1992]:* The table shows the England totals for the information requested. The figures for individual local authorities have been placed in the Library.

	Standard spending assessment £ million	*Equivalent net revenue expenditure £ million*	*Difference £ million*
Other services			
1990-91	4,502	5,632	1,130
1991-92	5,933	6,361	428
Capital financing			
1990-91	2,380	2,922	542
1991-92	2,951	2,973	22

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in chronological order those areas that have already received a recommendation from the Local Government Boundary Commission that they should be reorganised to a unitary authority together with the date of each recommendation.

Mr. Robin Squire: Only in its review of the Isle of Wight did the Local Government Boundary Commission state that it would have proposed a unitary authority, had it been in its power to do so. Their final report was received by the Secretary of State on 10 October 1986.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, at the lowest level of sub-heading used, the expenditure categories employed in itemising public expenditure attributable to the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Howard: Details of my Department's expenditure plans are set out in the Department's 1992 annual report, Cm 1908, and the 1992-93 supply estimates for class VIII environment, Cm 273. Copies of both documents are available in the Library of the House.

Earth Summit

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the specific objectives of Her Majesty's Government at the Earth summit in relation to each item in the proposed "Agenda 21" action plan.

Mr. Maclean: The 40 or so chapters of the Agenda 21 action plan all contain numerous proposals for action by Governments, international bodies, non-governmental organisations, business, local authorities and individual citizens. It is not feasible to set out the United Kingdom's objectives on every specific item. The Government are working with the other participants in the Earth summit to ensure that agenda 21 is given a high level of political commitment in Rio. It will then need to be adapted to the circumstances of individual countries and regions and to evolve over time.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government will press for the inclusion of *(a)* the polluter pays principle, *(b)* and extension of environmental impact assessment and *(c)* encouragement properly to evaluate environmental costs in the market place, to be included in the Earth summit declaration on the environment and development, the earth charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The latest draft of the Rio declaration, which has sometimes been referred to as the earth charter, is the product of long and detailed negotiations. It contains satisfactory language, much of it proposed by the United Kingdom, on environmental impact assessment and on internalising environmental costs, taking into account the polluter pays principle. The United Kingdom will strive to ensure that these references are retained in the final text.

Opencast Coal

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to his answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, column *74*, on minerals planning guidance note 3, whether the terms of reference of the recent review have included the principles of planning guidance as well as their practical operation;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, column *74*, if he will list the organisations consulted during the consultation exercise on minerals planning guidance note 3; how many responses have been received; if he will provide a breakdown of the responses; and if he will publish a copy of any questionnaire distributed as part of the exercise;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, column *74*, when his consultation exercise on minerals planning guidance note 3 was begun; when it is scheduled to finish; whether it was part of the normal review process or was initiated as a special review; when an announcement of the results will be made; and whether he plans any further reviews in 1992;

(4) pursuant to his answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, column *74*, on minerals planning guidance note 3, how local authorities were consulted; and if he will publish copies of the letters or questionnaires sent to local authorities.

Mr. Baldry: It is normal practice to monitor the effectiveness of mineral planning guidance notes. As part of the monitoring of MPG3 the Department wrote to representatives of the local authorities, the industry and environmental organisations on 19 December 1991 seeking their views on how well the guidelines were operating and whether they had created any problems. I am placing copies of the letter, which sought views on all the principal aspects of the guidance in MPG3, together with a list of the organisations consulted, in the Library of the House. Comments were requested by 20 March 1992, but responses have continued to come in since that date and will all be considered. Separate consultations were carried out by the Welsh Office.

To date, 55 responses have been received from outside bodies: 30 from local authority associations and individual local authorities; 10 from representatives of the industry; nine from environmental groups; and six from local residents' action groups. The responses are currently being evaluated and in the light of the results of that evaluation, I shall consider whether there is a need for revision of MPG3. I shall announce my decision as soon as possible.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration is being given to reversing the rule at public inquiries that local communities cannot in their objections to opencast mining challenge the commercial need for opencast coal.

Mr. Baldry: There is no such rule. Inspectors must take into account all representations which are material to the planning decision including any arguments advanced by the applicant in support of the proposals and any counter arguments advanced by objectors. However, the potential profitability or otherwise of any proposed development is not usually material to land use planning decisions.

EC Legislation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he intends to bring forward during the United Kingdom presidency of the Council of Ministers in respect of varying standards of implementation of EC environmental legislation by member states; what proposals he intends to bring forward on subsidiarity as it relates to environmental legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: During the presidency we intend to bring the question of proper implementation and enforcement of EC environmental legislation to the attention of the Environment Council, with a view to initiating regular reviews of those issues by Environment Ministers.

We shall continue to press the European Commission to bring forward proposals to set up a Community inspectorate to audit the performance of enforcement agencies within the member states. We will be hosting the first meeting of a new "network" of member state enforcement agencies with a view to setting this up on a permanent basis.

The principle of subsidiarity is already written into the environment chapter of the EC treaty. The treaty on European union agreed at Maastricht will, when it comes into effect, extend the principle to other areas of Community policy.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those sites of special scientific interest in the United Kingdom which contain significant areas of woodland, indicating for each whether the woodland consists mainly of native wildwoods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Climate Change

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals on *(a)* global warming and climate change and *(b)* the United Nations conference on environment and development will be put forward by the United Kingdom at the meeting of the European Agriculture Council on 24 and 25 May.

Mr. Maclean: Proposals for discussion at meetings of the Council of Ministers are primarily a matter for the presidency. My right hon. and learned Friend and I played a full part in discussion of the topics in question at the Environment Council on 26 May.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals on climate change were *(a)* discussed and *(b)* decided at the EC Environmental Council on 26 May.

Mr. Maclean: The Council endorsed conclusions on climate change tabled by the presidency which recognised the climate change convention as a significant first step in tackling this global problem and urged all countries to sign the convention during UNCED and thereafter to ratify it as soon as possible. The Council also received a report from the European Commission on proposals it intended to make on specific measures to limit CO_2 emissions.

City Challenge

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons Tameside MBC was not allowed to make a city challenge presentation.

Mr. Robin Squire: Tameside is not one of the 57 urban priority authorities and was not therefore invited to submit a bid. We have considered the possibility of including Tameside's bid in the city challenge competition, but came to the view that our policy should remain unchanged. Tameside MBC was formally notified of this decision on 18 May.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—A Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Mr. Howard: "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. Guidelines on purchasing by Government Departments already exist and are distributed by Her Majesty's Treasury.

The Department of Employment has been undertaking a survey of prompt payment record of Government Departments during the financial year 1991-92. The results of this exercise will be published in the near future by the Department of Trade and Industry, which now has responsibility for small firms issues, including late payment. After studying these results the Department will consider what further measures, if any, may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by the public sector.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Howard: It is the policy of my Department to ensure that payments, including those to small business suppliers, are made promptly within the period stipulated in the appropriate contract or where there is no contractual provision or other understanding, within 30 days of receipt of goods/services or the presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment, whichever is the later.

To help encourage prompt payment of bills by Government contractors to their sub-contractors all Government contracts are to contain a clause requiring the supplier of contractor to pay its sub-contractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the subcontractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

Conservation Areas (Shops)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for enabling local planning authorities to issue statutory guidelines for shop fronts and advertisements in conservation areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We have no plans to introduce statutory guide lines. Paragraphs 53 to 71 of my Department's circular 8/87 give general policy guidance to planning authorities about control of development, including outdoor advertisements, in conservation areas. The Government intend to issue later this year a consultative draft of a new planning policy guidance note about listed buildings and conservation areas.

Recycling

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress by local authorities in encouraging private citizens to separate all recyclable materials from household waste prior to collection.

Mr. MacLean: It is the Government's aim that 25 per cent. of household waste should be recycled by the end of this century. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires all waste collection authorities to prepare waste recycling plans. I am expecting the draft plans to be submitted to my right hon. and learned Friend by 1 August. These plans will provide the first comprehensive national survey of recycling activity. To assist local authorities in planning for recycling we have made available a programme of supplementary credit approvals worth £60 million over four years to stimulate investment in recycling projects and from 1 April this year it is now mandatory that waste disposal authorities should pay recycling credits to collection authorities that recycle waste.

Pesticides

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evaluations have been made of the risks in use of the pesticides (a) pentachlorophenol, *(b)* pentachlorophenyl laurate and *(c)* sodium pentachlorophenoxide by (i) his Department, (ii) consultants to his Department or (iii) agencies which report to his Department.

Mr. Maclean: The Department of the Environment has commissioned two reviews of pentachlorophenol, its salts and esters:

"Timber Preservation Chemicals: Volumes 1a and 1b"—Consultants in Environmental Sciences Ltd. Published October 1988, placed in the Library, November 1988.

"Environmental Hazard Assessment: Pentachorophenol"—S. J. Hobbs, (Building Research Establishment) P. D. Howe, S. Dobson (Institute of Terrestrial Ecology). To be published in Autumn 1992

The Department also contributes to the work of the International Programme on Chemical Safety, which in 1987 produced an Environmental health criteria document on pentachlorophenol:

"Pentachlorophenol: Environmental Health Criteria 71"—World Health Organisation 1987. ISBN 92 4 154271 3.

Green Citizens Charter

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response his Department has had to the brochure, "Green Rights and Responsibilities: a Citizen's Guide to the Environment", published by his Department earlier this year; and how many copies of the green citizens charter have been published, and at what cost to date.

Mr. Maclean: This booklet has received a positive response from members of the public, local authorities, companies and voluntary groups. One million copies have been published at a total cost of £119,000. My Department has held initial discussions of the document with the local authority associations and I look forward to developing those discussions further.

Local Government Boundary Commission

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of his guidelines for the Local Government Boundary Commission on London and metropolitan counties, contained in his Department's circulars 33/78 and 20/86.

Mr. Robin Squire: Copies of the circulars have been placed in the Library today.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the draft proposals published by the Local Government Boundary Commission regarding the boundaries of London boroughs for which final reports have yet to be issued, showing the dates of publication of first and further draft proposals and the dates by which comments were to be received.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is set out in the table. It includes those reviews where the final report has been submitted recently.

Timetable of Local Government Boundary Commission Reviews

Name of Review	*Date of draft proposals*	*Date by which recommendations were to be received*	*Date of further draft proposals*	*Date by which comments were to be received*	*Date of additional further draft proposals*	*Date of additional further draft proposals*	*Date of publication of final report*
Barking and Dagenham—boundaries with Redbridge, Newham and Havering	02.11.89	27.11.89	27.03.91	29.05.91	06.11.91	18.12.91	—
Brent[1]—boundaries with Barnet, Camden, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster	31.07.91	23.10.91	—	—	—	—	20.05.92
Bromley—boundary with Lewisham	21.08.91	16.10.91	—	—	—	—	27.05.92
Camden—boundaries with Barnet and Westminster	04.01.91	01.03.91	10.01.92	06.03.92	—	—	—
Ealing/Hammersmith and Fulham/ Hounslow (including Hounslow's boundary with Richmond Upon Thames)	09.03.92	11.05.92	—	—	—	—	—
Enfield—boundaries with Barnet, Hertsmere, Welwyn, Hatfield, Broxbourne and Epping Forest	17.09.90	26.11.90	06.03.92	01.05.92	—	—	—
Greenwich—boundary with Bromley	21.08.91	16.10.91	—	—	—	—	27.05.92
Hackney—boundaries with Haringey and Islington	09.07.91	10.09.91	24.02.92	21.04.92	—	—	—
Haringey—boundaries with Barnet, Camden and Enfield	11.03.91	17.05.91	09.03.92	05.05.92	—	—	—
Havering—boundaries with Redbridge, Brentwood, Thurrock and Barking and Dagenham	17.10.88	12.12.88	21.06.91	23.08.91	—	—	—
Heathrow—Hillingdon, Hounslow and Spelthorne	29.05.90	01.11.90	17.01.92	16.04.92	—	—	—
Hillingdon—boundaries with Ealing, Hounslow, South Bucks and Three Rivers	05.03.90	30.04.90	24.02.92	21.04.92	—	—	—
Hounslow—boundaries with Richmond and Spelthorne	10.02.92	06.04.92	—	—	—	—	—
Kensington and Chelsea—boundary with Hammersmith and Fulham	05.03.92	29.05.92	—	—	—	—	—
Kingston Upon Thames—boundaries with Merton, Richmond, Sutton, Wandsworth, Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell and Mole Valley	26.11.91	18.02.92	—	—	—	—	—
Lewisham—boundaries with Greenwich and Tower Hamlets	06.12.91	14.02.92	—	—	—	—	—
Merton—boundary with Croydon	10.02.92	06.04.92	—	—	—	—	—
Newham—boundaries with Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Hackney and Tower Hamlets	29.01.90	26.03.90	30.04.91	25.06.91	—	—	—
Redbridge—boundaries with Waltham Forest and Epping Forest	31.05.89	26.07.89	14.12.90	15.02.91	—	—	12.05.92
Richmond Upon Thames—boundary with Wandsworth	26.11.91	21.01.92	—	—	—	—	11.05.92
Sutton—boundaries with Croydon, Epsom and Ewell and Reigate and Banstead	27.01.92	16.03.92	—	—	—	—	—
Wandsworth—boundaries with Merton, Lambeth, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and including Merton's boundary with Lambeth	10.01.92	09.03.92	—	—	—	—	—
Westminster—boundaries with Kensington and Chelsea and Lambeth	27.02.92	23.04.92	—	—	—	—	—

[1] The Commission will submit a separate report on the electoral consequences of their final report in due course

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the findings of the Local Government Boundary Commission in its report No. 627, "The Boundaries of Greater London and the London Boroughs"; and if he will set up a wide-ranging review of the pattern of London boroughs.

Mr. Robin Squire: The report is a useful document based on the thorough work the Local Government Boundary Commission has done in its London boundary reviews. We have no plans for radical change to the pattern of local government in London.

Community Charge

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were registered for the community charge in each parliamentary constituency in Greater London for each year that the community charge register has been in operation.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not available.

Water Meters

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to accelerate the findings of the water meter trial areas.

Mr. Maclean: Two reports have so far been published and a final report will be produced in about 12 months' time, when all the trials have been completed. As I am keen that the substantial body of data collected about water metering should be fully analysed and made available promptly not only to the water industry but also to the regulatory bodies, I have proposed to the water industry that the Director General of Water Services should take the lead from the Government side in analysing the results of the trials and the implications for charging methods. In consultation with DOE and NRA, he will also co-ordinate, and where necessary commission, any further studies that are needed.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to speed up the introduction of water meters.

Mr. Maclean: The Director General of Water Services has warned water companies that they must make metering a more attractive option for individual customers. He has also asked them to draw up strategies for the general introduction of water metering where the overall benefit to customers outweighs the costs of installation.

We shall be issuing a consultation paper before the summer recess which will consider a range of possible water conservation measures, including the potential role of metering.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has reached any conclusions on the ability of water metering to avoid the issuing of drought orders.

Mr. Maclean: Information from the national water metering trial areas indicates a substantial reduction in the volume of water supplied particularly during periods of peak demand. However, any programme for the introduction of meters to existing properties will require careful planning and will take some years to complete. In the meantime, drought orders may be required in areas where there is a shortage of rainfall.

Council Elections

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to allow for local council elections in the metropolitan districts in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Government have no plans to change the arrangements for elections to metropolitan district councils.

Paper Products

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has considered the environmental impact of *(a)* paper and *(b)* tissue products manufactured using (i) recycled feedstock and (ii) new fibre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The European Council of Ministers adopted a regulation in March establishing a Community eco-labelling scheme which is due to come into operation towards the end of the year. The aim of the scheme is to identify products which do the least harm to the environment.

In preparing for the introduction of the scheme Denmark is leading a study to develop criteria for the award of eco-labels to paper products including fine papers and tissues. This study, to which the United Kingdom is contributing, is examining all the environmental impacts of paper manufacture.

Nuclear Waste

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to dry-store all nuclear waste on site and ban the disposal of nuclear waste underground or at sea.

Mr. Maclean: Government policy for radioactive waste management is set out in chapter 15 of the 1990 White Paper "This Common Inheritance". High-level or heat generating radioactive waste will be stored at Sellafield and Dounreay for at least 50 years to allow the heat and radioactivity to reduce. It is planned to dispose of intermediate and low-level radioactive waste in the deep disposal facility which UK Nirex is responsible for developing. The Government are reviewing whether the sea disposal option for the disposal of radioactive waste needs to be maintained.

Deep Reservoirs

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has made of the mining of deep freshwater resources; what is the estimated age of these deep reservoirs; and what is their estimated current depletion rate.

Mr. Maclean: These are matters for the National Rivers Authority which under section 19 of the Water Resources

Act 1991, has responsibility for the conservation, redistribution and augmentation of water resources in England and Wales.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much derelict land grant was paid in Liverpool last year; how much is budgeted for the present year; and if he will consider ways of accelerating the treatment and landscaping of derelict urban land.

Mr. Baldry: Derelict land grant paid in Liverpool last year was £2,315,190. The provisional grant allocation for the present year is £1,508,000.

In order to improve the delivery of policies for land development, including the reclamation of derelict urban land, the Government propose to establish an urban regeneration agency. One of the agency's main objectives will be to treat derelict land in urban areas.

Toxic Waste Incinerator, East Howden

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a decision on the inspector's report arising from the public inquiry into the application to build a toxic waste incinerator at East Howden, north Tyneside.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend will issue his decision on the Howden and linked incinerator inquiries on Teeside as soon as it is practicable to do so.

Council Tax

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the regulations for the procedure for an appeal against the valuation of a property for the purpose of the council tax.

Mr. Robin Squire: I expect regulations to be available before the summer recess.

Liverpool Garden Festival

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the present use of the Liverpool garden festival site.

Mr. Baldry: The Liverpool garden festival site covers 105 acres of which 85 acres has recently been taken over by Tomorrow's Leisure, a subsidiary of Norstead Leisure Ltd, to develop a multi-leisure complex known as Pleasure Island. Officially launched on 7 May 1992, with regional selective assistance of £1 million towards the estimated project cost of £10 million and car parking provided by Merseyside development corporation, Pleasure Island is expected to create 250 new jobs.

The remaining 20 acres was designated for public open space and housing, of which 393 dwellings are now complete.

Power Plant Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information has been provided by his Department to the European Commission on the levels and types of atmospheric particulate pollution discharged from Britain's most polluting power plants; and if he will publish the documentation.

Mr. Maclean: None.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his officials will reply to the letters from Castle Morpeth borough council dated 8 November 1991, 28 January 1992, and 16 March 1992 requesting guidance on compulsory competitive tendering for leisure management.

Mr. Redwood: My officials replied on 21 May 1992. I will send a copy of the letter to the hon. Member.

Poll Tax Surcharges

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average level of poll tax surcharge levied in the current financial year in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* the city of Liverpool; what rights he will give to citizens to refuse payment of surcharges; what representations he has received about the Liverpool surcharge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The average amount shown under "other adjustments" on 1992-93 community charge bills for English authorities is £22. Of this, £14 is accounted for by the budgeted provision for non-collection of 1992-93 community charges. The corresponding figures for Liverpool city council are £106 and £30 respectively, and I have received a number of letters from citizens of Liverpool about this. Whilst I have considerable sympathy with those chargepayers who have to pay extra for non-collection, I believe it is right that these amounts should continue to be met locally as part of the total charge, in the same way as the equivalent unpaid sums were treated under the old rating system.

Groundwater

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's estimate of the level of groundwater under London over the past 10 years, and of its quality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: This is primarily a matter for the National Rivers Authority which monitors groundwater levels. I understand that indications from recent surveys are that levels below London are rising by some 1 to 2 metres per year because of a drop in industrial activity and consequent abstraction. The NRA and Thames Water are currently conducting studies into the rising levels and the quality of London's groundwater.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to monitor the purity of groundwater from private boreholes.

Mr. Maclean: This is primarily a matter for the National Rivers Authority. However, water companies and other abstractors of water from private boreholes do carry out their own monitoring of groundwater quality. Holders of authorisations to discharge effluents underground also monitor groundwater by the use of boreholes.

The Private Water Supplies Regulations 1991 set out the duties of local authorities for sampling and analysing those supplies used for drinking, washing, cooking or commercial food production. The drinking water inspectorate is responsible for checking that authorities in England and Wales comply with the requirements of these regulations.

Valuation Tribunals

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report of the review committee of the management of tribunals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I expect to consider the report of the financial management and policy review of the valuation tribunals shortly.

Disabled People (Housing)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by district council the amount of money spent on adaptations to the homes of disabled people in each of the last five years; and what contribution was made towards those costs from central Government funds.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* A table has been deposited in the Library with the available information about amounts of money spent by local authorities on adaptations to homes of disabled persons. It covers the calendar years 1987 to 1991.

This table shows total grants paid by local authorities to private owners and tenants, including council tenants, for adaptations to homes of disabled persons. These payments are of conversion and improvement grants, and intermediate grants for disabled persons' dwellings under part XV of the Housing Act 1985, together with disabled facilities grants under part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, as introduced from July 1990.

The table also shows the value of the work completed on authorities' own housing stock on adaptations for disabled persons.

For grants approved under the Housing Act 1985, the Department provides a contribution of 90 per cent. of the loan charges payable on grant expenditure.

For disabled facilities grants the Department provides a 75 per cent. contribution towards local authorities' expenditure on grants for owner occupiers and private tenants. Local authorities' expenditure on these grants for council tenants is eligible for 100 per cent. subsidy from the housing revenue account within the authority's subsidy limits, as is their expenditure on adaptations for disabled council tenants.

Canary Wharf

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total sum expended by the London Docklands development corporation in connection with the development of Canary Wharf.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* The London Docklands development corporation spent £4 million on acquisition and site clearance, £28 million on the eastern access road and Heron's Quay roundabout and £15 million on the expansion of the electricity supply, and received from Olympia and York £20 million for a long lease on the site. In addition, Olympia and York contributed £70 million to the docklands light railway which benefits the whole northern docklands area.

DNV Technica

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what role is being undertaken for his Department by DNV Technica; whether this company was appointed as a result of competitive tender; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* DNV Technica completed last year an evaluation of currently available technologies for abating nitrogen oxide emissions from large combustion plants. The initial contract was let by competitive tendering in December 1989 and completed in March 1991. A further contract with Technica, let in August 1991 by single tender action and completed in March 1992, provided United Kingdom input to the UNECE NO task force.

Housing, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been obtained in Liverpool in capital receipts from the sale of council homes since the introduction of the right-to-buy.

Mr. Baldry: The total discounted values of all sales of houses and flats for each year from 1980-81, as reported by Liverpool city council, are listed in the table. Actual cash receipts in any year will depend on the extent to which the sales were financed by loans from the authority.

Liverpool Discounted value of all sales (£000)

Year	Value
1980-81	3,796
1981-82	[1]—
1982-83	[1]—
1983-84	18,610
1984-85	[1]—
1985-86	2,884
1986-87	3,615
1987-88	2,272
1988-89	3,329
1989-90	5,156
1990-91	5,868
1991-92	4,282

[1] Not available

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent communications his Department has had with the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee on the options for returning to countries of origin radioactive wastes arising from spent fuel reprocessed at Sellafield and Dounreay.

Mr. Maclean: The Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee has been asked for its views on the technical basis of British Nuclear Fuels' proposals on implementing the return of waste options in its reprocessing contracts with overseas customers, and in particular on the likely radiological and environmental impact for the United Kingdom. The Atomic Energy Authority is still considering its options for the management of waste from reprocessing at Dounreay.

Eyhorne Manor

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken by his Department to ensure that British Rail is discharging its

listed buildings responsibility for Eyhorne Manor, Hollingbourne in the corridor of the safeguarded section of the currently proposed route for the Channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Key: I have been asked to reply.

Enforcement of listed building controls, including service of repairs notices, would in the first instance be a matter for the local planning authority; but I understand that Maidstone borough council is not aware of any current problems at the manor. British Rail is taking steps to tidy the garden.

Caravans Act 1966

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in considering designation within the terms of the Caravans Act 1966, he will make it his policy to approve an additional transit site for the county of Hereford and Worcester.

Sir George Young: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will consider applications for designation on a county or district-wide basis and must be satisfied that the criteria for designation have been met. It is for the county council to decide whether or not an additional transit site is needed in the county of Hereford and Worcester. In doing so, the county council will bear in mind the numbers of gipsies frequenting the area and they must satisfy my right hon. and learned Friend that adequate site provision has been made to meet the accommodation needs, within reason, of the gipsies who reside in or resort to the area.

PRIME MINISTER

Leith

Q9. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Prime Minister if he intends to pay an official visit to Leith in the near future.

The Prime Minister: I visited Scotland yesterday. I have no immediate plans to visit Leith, but I shall be visiting Scotland again in the near future.

Telephone Rental Charges

Q10. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received regarding the regulation of telephone rental charges; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received various representations on this subject. The regulation of British Telecom's rental charges is a matter for the Director General of Telecommunications in the first instance. I understand that he hopes to complete his current review of BT's prices shortly.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give the total expenditure by the Prime Minister's Office on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

The Prime Minister: Expenditure by my office on press and public relations was not recorded separately before 1987-88. The total expenditure for each year since then is as follows:

Year	*£*
1987-88	377,987
1988-89	419,326
1989-90	427,802
1990-91	553,068
1991-92	[1]606,933
1992-93	[2]629,649

[1] estimate
[2] budget

Note: The figures from 1990-91 onwards include notional superannuation costs which are excluded from the figures for earlier years.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give the total expenditure by the Cabinet Office on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

The Prime Minister: Expenditure by the Cabinet Office on press and public relations for the years from 1984-85 is as follows:

Year	*£*
1984-85	247,495
1985-86	232,980
1986-87	224,813
1987-88	215,925
1988-89	201,837
1989-90	205,650
1990-91	165,088
1991-92	[1]217,358
1992-93	[2]229,471

[1] estimate
[2] budget

In addition, there was expenditure on publicity and public information associated with the citizens charter of £1,014,045—estimate—in 1991-92. Similar expenditure in 1992-93 is provisionally estimated at £1,280,000.

Similar information is not available for earlier years.

Consultants Fees

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total sum paid out in fees by the Cabinet Office to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

The Prime Minister: The expenditure by the Cabinet Office, including, from its creation on 1 October 1987, the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service on management and computer consultancies, including certain consultancies relating to the civil service as a whole, in the financial years from 1983-84 was as follows:

Year	£
1983-84	152,000
1984-85	423,818
1985-86	329,334
1986-87	505,092
1987-88	417,778

The figures for each year since then, which exclude the cost of computer consultancies, are as follows:

Year	£
1988-89	70,608
1989-90	51,500
1990-91	182,000
1991-92	[1]194,390
1992-93	[2]343,060

[1] Estimate.
[2] Budget.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total sum paid out in fees by the Prime Minister's Office to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

The Prime Minister: There has been no expenditure by my office on fees to management consultants since 1979-80, and none is planned for 1992-93.

EC (Enlargement)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on Government policy in respect of Chancellor Kohl's proposed veto on the enlargement of the EC; and what means exist of overcoming this veto under the Maastricht treaty.

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of any such statement by the German Government. The Maastricht European Council agreed that accession negotiations could start as soon as the negotiations on future financing are concluded. Under the terms of the treaty on European union decisions to admit new members are taken by unanimity.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by *(a)* the Prime Minister's Office and *(b)* the Cabinet Office since 1 November 1991.

The Prime Minister: No such surveys were carried out for my office or the Cabinet Office during the period in question.

Earth Summit

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister what attempts have been made by Her Majesty's Government *(a)* to publicise the issues to be discussed and decisions to be taken at the Earth summit in Rio in June and *(b)* to publicise Her Majesty's Government's policies and proposals for the Earth summit; and what has been the cost to Her Majesty's Government of publicity promoted by all Departments of Government and the United Nations conference on environment and development.

The Prime Minister: We have taken an active and positive role in disseminating information on the forthcoming Earth summit. The United Kingdom's approach has been set out to Parliament, in speeches, articles and correspondence, and media briefings. We have produced booklets and videos, commissioned reports and kept in close touch with local authorities and the non-governmental community. The directly attributable publicity costs have fallen within the budgets of the Departments concerned.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received since 9 April on the Earth summit to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June; and what responses he has made.

The Prime Minister: The Government have received many thousands of representations from interested organisations and individual citizens. Replies have confirmed that I will be going to Rio de Janeiro: that the Government are committed to working for a successful and productive outcome to the Earth summit; that we are aiming for international conventions on climate change and biological diversity; and that we will be working for a statement on the sustainable management of the world's forests, a Rio declaration of international environmental principles, and a coherent, realistic and measurable plan of action for the 21st century, agenda 21.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with counterpart heads of government on the prospects for the Earth summit in Brazil since 9 April.

The Prime Minister: I have discussed the Earth summit with many of the Heads of Government I have met since 9 April.

Third World Environment

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister what responses Her Majesty's Government intends to make to the World bank's call for greater multilateral investment to be made in the world's poorer countries to improve the environment.

The Prime Minister: The Government broadly agree with the analysis in the 1992 world development report published by the World bank last month. This suggests that the bulk of the investments required to meet the costs of a better environment will be paid for by the customers of the private and public enterprises responsible for the damage and by the beneficiaries of improved environmental conditions.

The World bank notes that Governments will have to spend more too, primarily from increased domestic savings; but that international finance, private and official, will also have a crucial role. Britain intends to participate fully in the replenishments of the multilateral funds which will help to provide developing countries with the necessary resources.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what percentage of the total work force in his office are registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his office; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No current members of my work force are registered as disabled. For recruitment purposes

my office is part of the Cabinet Office which is an equal opportunities employer, and continually seeks to encourage the employment of people with disabilities.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give separate figures for the spending by the Prime Minister's Office on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

The Prime Minister: My office has incurred no expenditure on advertising or promotional material and there are no plans for any such expenditure in 1992-93.

Libya

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will assess the results of sanctions against Libya.

The Prime Minister: Members of the United Nations were required to report by 15 May on the measures they have taken to implement the sanctions imposed by United Nations Security Council resolution 748. The United Nations secretariat is now assessing their responses. Sanctions are being widely implemented. I hope they will achieve their objective: to make Libya comply in full with Security Council resolutions 731 and 748.

PRIME MINISTER

Radar Station, Fylingdales

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to refuse any request made by the US administration to modify the radar station at Fylingdales; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* RAF Fylingdales is a ballistic missile early warning site whose operation is the subject of a bilateral agreement drawn up in 1960 between the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States. There has been no request for any change to this agreement.

India (Treaty)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if the extradition treaty agreed between Britain and India has been ratified by both Governments; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* We and the Indian Government have not yet signed the treaty, but we intend to do this as soon as possible. Ratification will follow in due course.

Ministerial Sub-committee on London

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will make a statement on the role of the ministerial sub-committee on London as a policy forum for discussions on the future of London; when the sub-committee has met; and what was its agenda;

(2) what plans he has to publish the proceedings and decisions of the ministerial sub-committee on London.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* The terms of reference of the ministerial sub-committee on London, together with those of all other ministerial committees and sub-committees of the Cabinet, were given in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 19 May at columns *110-18*.

The Government will continue to make their decisions known to Parliament and the public. I do not, however, propose to give details on the topics discussed by individual committees, the timing of meetings or their proceedings.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Schedule E Tax

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will issue a practice note to confirm that re-employment counselling and training is not taxable under any part of the schedule E tax legislation.

Mr. Dorrell: The tax position of re-employment counselling and similar training arranged by employers for their employees depends on the precise circumstances in which it is given. It is not the case that it is invariably exempt from tax. A charge might arise under the legislation dealing with the taxation of redundancy arrangements, subject to the £30,000 exemption which the legislation provides for a redundancy package as a whole.

Maxwell Companies

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Governor of the Bank of England regarding the role of banks and other financial institutions involved in lending currency and share dealing transactions with the late Mr. Robert Maxwell and companies connected with him; and if he will raise issues of public concern arising from those transactions with the Governor when he next meets him.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer meets the Governor of the Bank of England from time to time to discuss a range of issues.

Alcohol Tax

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on setting a minimum rate of excise duty on spirits.

Sir John Cope: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 21 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *203*,.

Stamp Duty

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the continuation of the temporary suspension of stamp duty after August; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: We have received a number of representations for the temporary increase in the stamp duty threshold to be extended beyond 19 August. When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced the increase last December, he made it clear that it was a temporary measure for eight months to help stimulate the housing market. We do not propose to extend the increased threshold beyond 19 August.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the total work force in his Departments are registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Departments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The percentage of the total work force in the Chancellor's departments who are registered as disabled is shown in the table. In many instances, departments also employ people with disabilities who have chosen not to register. Departments seek to implement the relevant parts of the civil service code of practice on the employment of disabled people.

Departments, Agencies and NDPBs	*Per cent.*
Her Majesty's Customs and Excise	1·3
Government Actuary's Department	[1]1·4
Inland Revenue	1·6
National Investment and Loans Office	4·7
Department for National Savings	2·8
Paymaster General's Office	3·7
Registry of Friendly Societies	[1]0·6
Her Majesty's Treasury	1·0
Central Office of Information	[1]1·2
Central Statistical Office	[1]1·6
HMSO	[1]1·6
Royal Mint	[1]2·3
National Economic Development Office	[1]0·0

[1] As at May 1992. All other figures as at June 1991.

Wholesale Financial Markets

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the benefits arising from the transfer of the regulation of wholesale financial markets from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Treasury.

Mr. Nelson: The wholesale financial markets are regulated by the Bank of England under section 43 of the Financial Services Act 1986. I have no reason to believe that the transfer of responsibilities for financial services from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Treasury will have any impact in this area.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—a Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers."

Mr. Portillo: "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. Guidelines on purchasing by Government Departments already exist and are distributed by Her Majesty's Treasury.

The Department of Employment has undertaken a survey of prompt payment records of Government Departments during the financial year 1991-92 and the results of this exercise will be published in the near future by the Department of Trade and Industry, which now has responsibility for small firms issues, including late payment. After studying these results the Department will consider what further measures, if any, may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by the public sector.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Portillo: Government Departments, including their executive agencies, are required to pay their bills promptly. The timing of payment should normally be stipulated in Government contracts. Where there is no contractual provision or other understanding, Departments should pay within 30 days of receipt of goods/services or the presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment, whichever is the later.

To help encourage prompt payment of bills by Government contractors to their sub-contractors all Government contracts are to contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay its sub-contractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the subcontractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has held with the Inland Revenue Staff Federation on the future of performance-related pay and plans for structural change within the Inland Revenue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor met the general secretary last September and discussed performance-related pay. Discussions are now taking place between Inland Revenue management and the Inland Revenue Staff Federation about the future of performance-related pay and plans for structural change within the Inland Revenue.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Sir John Cope: Expenditure on press and public relations is as follows:

The expenditure for Her Majesty's Treasury, excluding the BT share offer, was £548,264 in 1988-89, £564,691 in 1989-90, £510,489 in 1990-91 and £578,358 in 1991-92. The estimate for 1992-93 is £624,432. Press and public relation expenditure for the BT share offer was £1,644,000 in 1991-92 and is estimated at £40,000 in 1992-93. The figures for the BT share offer include the cost of marketing advice. Comparable figures for earlier years are unavailable because of machinery of Government changes and could be given only at disproportionate cost.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give separate figures for the estimated spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material during 1992-93.

Mr. Nelson: The estimated spending on advertising and other promotional material by Her Majesty's Treasury during 1992-93 is £72,500, none of which will be for television or radio advertising.

RPI Advisory Committee

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the members of the Retail Price Index Advisory Commitee, the dates on which they were appointed and the length of their terms of office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The members of the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee are:

Chairman
Mr. W. P. McLennan (Director, Central Statistical Office)
Members
Mr. J. Astin (EUROSTAT, Luxembourg)
Mr. S. Brittan (The Financial Times)
Professor D. Currie (London Business School)
Professor M. C. Fleming (Loughbourgh University)
Mr. K. H. B. Frere (Nominated by the National Federation of Consumer Groups)
Mr. S. G. B. Henry (Bank of England)
Mr. T. Hoyes (Nominated by Age Concern)
Mr. J. Hughes (Nominated by the National Consumer Council)
Mr. D. Lea OBE (Nominated by the Trades Union Congress)
Miss R. Lea (The Mitsubishi Bank Ltd.)
Miss R. J. Maurice
Mr. C. J. Mowl (HM Treasury)
Dr. J. Muellbauer (Nuffield College, Oxford)
Professor J. F. Pickering (Portsmouth Polytechnic)
Professor D. G. Rhys (Cardiff Business School)
Mrs. B. Rosewell (Business Strategies Ltd)
Dr. P. Rowlatt (National Economic Research Associates)
Dr. A. Sentance (Nominated by the Confederation of British Industry)
Professor R. Turvey (London School of Economics)
Mr. R. G. Ward (Central Statistical Office)
Secretary
Mr. D. J. Sellwood (Central Statistical Office)
Assistant Secretary
Mrs. M. S. Dolling (Central Statistical Office)

They were appointed in March 1992. There is no fixed term of office for committee members; the committee is appointed with specific terms of reference and members normally serve until examination of the matters referred has been completed. The current terms of reference were announced on 19 May 1992, at column *75* by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer).

Car Taxation

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will alter the current tax treatment of cars so as to favour fuel efficient cars.

Mr. Dorrell: I have noted the hon. Member's suggestion.

Single Currency

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list any two or more countries which operate a single market but do not have a single currency.

Mr. Nelson: Australia and New Zealand have removed most barriers to the free movement of goods, services, labour and capital between them, but do not share a single currency. Other groups of countries—such as the United Kingdom and Ireland and the Benelux countries—have had very liberal trade arrangements for some time without a single currency.

Spirits and Wines

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give an update on negotiations at the last Ecofin regarding the question of harmonisation rating of spirits and wines.

Sir John Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 21 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *203*.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library *(a)* the representations he has recently received from the CBI and others on advance corporation tax and *(B)* the text of his replies to these submissions.

Mr. Dorrell: In his last Budget statement, my right hon. Friend said he had received many representations about surplus advance corporation tax and set out the Government's position. A copy of the representations made by the CBI on 29 January 1992 has been placed in the Library.

European Co-operative Statute

Mr. Michael: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column 79, if he will give the starting date and the closing date for the formal consultation exercise in regard to the draft European co-operative statute.

Mr. Nelson: We hope to issue a combined consultative document before the end of this month on all three draft EC 'social economy' statutes, including the European co-operative statute, and their accompanying employee participation directives. Interested parties will be invited to give their comments by 28 August.

Environment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what matters in regard to the environment were *(a)* discussed and *(b)* decided at the meeting G7 held in Washington on 25-26 April.

Sir John Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the statement issued by the G7 on 26 April, copies of which are being deposited in the House Libraries. The statement sets out the topics considered at the meeting: these did not include the environment, and no decisions were taken on environmental matters.

Company Cars

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to eliminate the company car subsidy.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) on 14 May, at column *163*.

Inheritance Tax and CTT

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with respect to schemes for conditional exemption from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax since 1976 involving the granting of public access to the countryside *(a)* how many such schemes have been agreed and what is the total amount of tax relief involved, *(b)* how many schemes are under discussion, *(c)* how many miles of public footpath have been created, *(d)* how many miles of permissive path have been created and *(e)* how many acres of land have been opened up for a right to roam.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the number of cases of land and buildings for which conditional exemption from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax has been granted in each year from 1983-84. Comparable figures for earlier years, separate figures for land only and figures for cases under consideration are not available at acceptable cost.

	Number
1983-84	16
1984-85	18
1985-86	22
1986-87	18
1987-88	22
1988-89	11
1989-90	9
1990-91	17
1991-92	16

The annual average cost of inheritance tax conditional exemption for land and buildings is estimated to have been between £5 million and £10 million over this period.

I regret that statistics of new public footpaths and permissive paths, or of land over which there is a right to roam, resulting from conditional exemption are not available.

Gulf War

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to the Exchequer of the Gulf war; and what was the cash contribution of other countries.

Mr. Portillo: The total cost to the exchequer of the Gulf conflict will not be known with certainty for some time. The additional military costs incurred are currently estimated by the Ministry of Defence to be of the order of £2·5 billion. Further direct costs borne by the Exchequer include claims against the Export Credits Guarantee Department, for which the corrected estimate is some £750 million, to be met over several years but which may be recoverable in part; and costs of some £13 million for the health departments and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Cash contributions provided by other Governments to help meet the United Kingdom costs amount to some £2,049 million.

Wakefield Valuation Office

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the reasons for the closure of the district valuation office in Wakefield and outline the steps taken to inform the public of this proposal prior to closure.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* The Wakefield valuation office closed on 30 September 1991, upon merger with the Doncaster valuation office.

The merger was effected as part of the valuation office restructuring programme announced in 1989, to address the loss of domestic rating and the loss of 1,000 posts associated with that function.

The operational needs of the branch with the personnel considerations of the staff involved were met by a merged office, located in Doncaster. Local professional practices were advised of the transfer of work as were members of the public who were in correspondence with the office during the preceding four weeks. Arrangements have been made for mail to be redirected for 12 months and telephone directories amended.

Commonwealth of Independent States

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider linking the availability of Government credits to the Commonwealth of Independent States to the amount of bad debt outstanding to British companies who have exported to the Commonwealth of Independent States; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* The Prime Minister announced at the time of President Yeltsin's visit to London in February that up to £280 million of medium-term export credit cover would be made available to the states of the former Soviet Union subject to certain conditions. One of these conditions was that the country concerned should have signed the memorandum of understanding of 28 October 1991, acknowledging joint and several liability for the debts of the former Soviet Union, including, of course, debts outstanding to British exporters. This condition will ensure that no new credit is given to any member of the CIS which does not accept liability for its obligations to British exporters. The Government lose no opportunity to remind its various interlocutors in the CIS of the importance of honouring these obligations.

Public Service Pensions

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of *(a)* civil service pensioners and *(b)* other public service pensioners who left the pension list during the years 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* Details of the pensioners of the main centrally managed public service pension schemes who ceased to draw their pensions in the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88 are as follows. Figures are not kept centrally for the locally administered local government, police, and fire service schemes, nor for those schemes operated by non-departmental public bodies.

	1986-87	*1987-88*
Civil service	9,798	9,033
Armed forces	[1]12,265	10,790
Teachers (England and Wales)	6,021	6,313

	1986-87	1987-88
Teachers (Scotland)	919	878
NHS (England and Wales)	8,121	8,932
NHS (Scotland)	835	776

[1] Includes an estimated figure for Royal Navy and Royal Marine ratings.

PSBR

Mr. Burden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest Government forecast for the public sector borrowing requirement in 1992-93.

Mr. Portillo: £28·1 billion, as set out in the 1992 "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Photocopy Agreements

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the total of capital allowances to *(a)* finance companies and *(b)* supplier companies in respect of cost per copy photocopy agreements in the most recent year available; and what is his estimate of the total of revenue allowances for users of copiers subject to such agreements.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that the information is not available.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Government Departments, including their executive agencies, are required to pay their bills promptly. The timing of payment should normally be stipulated in Government contracts. Where there is no contractual provision or other understanding, Departments should pay within 30 days of receipt of goods/services or on the presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment, whichever is the later.

To help encourage prompt payment of bills by Government to their sub-contractors all Government contracts are to contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay its sub-contractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the sub-contractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

My Department will continue to comply with Government best practice on this matter.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—a Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. Guidelines on purchasing by Government Departments already exists and are distributed by HM Treasury.

The Department of Employment has been undertaking a survey of prompt payment record of Government Departments during the financial year 1991-92 and the results of this exercise will be published in the near future by the Department of Trade and Industry, which now has responsibility for small firms issues, including late payment. After studying these results the Department will consider what future measures, if any, may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by the public sector.

Police Manpower

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications there were in each police force in England and Wales for increased police manpower for 1992-93; what are the numbers involved and the numbers agreed to for the current year; and if he will list alongside the percentage change in crime for each force since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table.

	Additional posts applied for	Posts approved	Per cent. change in crime 1979-92
Avon and Somerset	7	2	+200
Bedfordshire	76	61	+103
Cambridgeshire	10	10	+136
Cheshire	20	20	+118
Cleveland	Nil	Nil	+124
Cumbria	24	4	+131
Derbyshire	56	25	+96
Devon and Cornwall	70	48	+149
Dorset	26	15	+122
Durham	20	Nil	+138
Dyfed Powys	50	25	+121
Essex	58	58	+101
Gloucestershire	48	1	+237
Greater Manchester	140	20	+124
Gwent	10	1	+89
Hampshire	69	67	+115
Hertfordshire	34	4	+43
Humberside	22	9	+147
Kent	82	82	+150
Lancashire	32	4	+114
Leicestershire	27	26	+196
Lincolnshire	Nil	Nil	+156
Merseyside	88	Nil	+37
Norfolk	25	25	+183
Northamptonshire	23	23	+155
Northumbria	92	27	+127
North Wales	30	17	+88
North Yorkshire	25	4	+135
Nottinghamshire	Nil	Nil	+107
South Wales	44	Nil	+126
South Yorkshire	16	15	+123
Staffordshire	20	4	+127
Suffolk	30	17	+98
Surrey	30	3	+86
Sussex	35	32	+131
Thames Valley	132	87	+147
Warwickshire	15	4	+189
West Mercia	30	29	+111
West Midlands	121	11	+93
West Yorkshire	79	Nil	+130
Wiltshire	77	67	+91
City of London	Nil	Nil	+11

The rate of increase in crime is only one aspect of a complex of information against which decisions on establishment increases are made. These include actual crime levels; other demands on the police; population levels; and existing manpower levels.

Fines (Non-payment)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his plans for future imprisonment of non-payers of fines.

Mr. Jack: Imprisonment is needed as the last resort for fine defaulters who have culpably failed or wilfully refused to pay a fine. The Criminal Justice Act 1991 which comes into effect in October this year will make fine assessment more realistic and fines easier to enforce. A new system of unit fines, relating fines more closely to an offender's ability to pay, should, together with the new power to attach fines to income support, ensure that imprisonment for default is restricted to those who have no excuse not to pay.

National Identity Cards

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce national identity cards for all citizens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I am not at present persuaded of the case for a national identity card system either on policing grounds or for immigration control purposes.

Police Assaults

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers of the North Wales constabulary have been victims of assault whilst on duty for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Jack: The available information has been provided by the North Wales police force and is contained in the table.

Number of assaults on police officers in north Wales

Date of offence	*Offences Against the Person Act 1861*			*Police Act 1964*	
	Section 18	*Section 20*	*Section 47*	*Summary section 51*	*Total assaults*
May 1991	—	—	10	8	18
June 1991	1	—	13	15	29
July 1991	—	1	8	10	19
August 1991	1	—	9	6	16
September 1991	—	—	11	10	21
October 1991	—	—	10	10	20
November 1991	—	3	14	14	31
December 1991	—	2	14	10	26
January 1992	—	—	6	4	10
February 1992	—	—	9	6	15
March 1992	—	—	9	12	21
April 1992	—	—	6	8	14
Total: May 1991 to April 1992	2	6	119	113	240

Offences Against the Person Act 1861:
Section 18—Wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm.
Section 20—Inflicting bodily injury.
Section 47—Assault occasioning bodily harm.
Police Act 1964:
Section 51—Assaults on constables.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions there were for each of the last 12 months for assaulting police officers of the North Wales constabulary whilst on duty.

Mr. Jack: The information available centrally relates to a study undertaken in the last six months of 1991 into convictions for assaults where the victim was a police officer. The study was published in Home Office Statistical Bulletin 3/92, a copy of which is in the Library. Table 9 of this bulletin shows that there were 45 such convictions recorded in North Wales/Dyfed-Powys during this six-month period.

Number sentenced for assault on a police officer by CPS area

	All offences			*Indictable offences*[1]		
	Total sentenced	*Number per 100,000 population*	*Percentage use of custody*	*Total sentenced*	*Number per 100,000 population*	*Percentage use of custody*
Avon and Somerset	146	12	16	30	2	20
Cambridge/Lincoln	42	4	17	23	2	[2]17
Cheshire	51	6	22	21	3	[2]29
Cleveland/North Yorkshire	58	5	14	13	1	[2]8
Derbyshire	22	3	[2]50	9	1	[2]78
Devon and Cornwall	42	3	10	7	1	[2]—
Dorset/Hampshire	66	3	18	21	1	[2]29
Essex	32	2	25	14	1	[2]21
Gloucester/Wiltshire	91	9	16	28	3	21
Greater Manchester	97	4	15	20	1	[2]25
Hertford/Bedford	70	5	27	27	2	30

	All offences			Indictable offences[1]		
	Total sentenced	Number per 100,000 population	Percentage use of custody	Total sentenced	Number per 100,000 population	Percentage use of custody
Humberside	36	5	8	2	—	[2]100
Kent	55	4	18	9	1	[2]44
Lancashire/Cumbria	86	5	14	31	2	28
Leicester/Northampton	100	8	20	27	2	37
Inner London	245	12	24	41	2	51
North London	31	1	19	11	—	[2]45
South London/Surrey	119	5	22	41	2	35
Merseyside	132	11	10	10	1	[2]50
Norfolk/Suffolk	48	4	23	23	2	[2]43
Northumbria/Durham	54	3	11	7	—	[2]29
North Wales/Dyfed Powys	45	5	7	10	1	[2]20
Nottingham	94	11	30	36	4	50
South Wales/Gwent	235	15	12	25	1	[2]23
South Yorkshire	143	13	14	36	3	17
Stafford/Warwick	55	4	5	13	1	[2]8
Sussex	22	2	[2]45	9	1	[2]67
Thames Valley	18	1	[2]—	2	—	[2]—
West Mercia	49	5	20	11	1	[2]36
West Midlands	149	7	20	56	2	32
West Yorkshire	68	4	18	24	1	[2]33

[1] Excludes common assault (S.39) and assault on a constable.
[2] Less than 25 offenders sentenced.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers of the North Wales constabulary were assaulted with a weapon whilst on duty for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Michael Jack: The North Wales police force's computer records indicate that three officers in the force were assaulted with a weapon between May 19[illegible] and April 1992.

Boundary Commission

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the Boundary Commission for England to begin its review of the parliamentary boundaries in London; what work has already been undertaken in this regard; when submissions will be invited from interested individuals and organisations prior to the publication of provisional recommendations; and from what date submissions will be invited.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the Boundary Commission for England has not yet decided when it will start work on its review of parliamentary boundaries in London. However, the practice of the commission is not to undertake consultation prior to publication of its provisional recommendations. When such recommendations have been published, representations with respect to the proposed recommendations may be made to the commission within the statutory period of one month after the date of publication.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the names of the Parliamentary Boundary Commissioners for Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Madam Speaker is chairman of the commission. The other members are:

Member	Appointed by	Period of office
The Hon. Mr. Justice Anthony Evans	Lord Chancellor	April 1989 to 31 December 1992
Mr. W. P. Davey CBE, DL, IPFA	Home Secretary	March 1989 to 31 December 1992
Mr. M. P. McLaggan JP, DL, MA	Secretary of State for Wales	[1]March 1989 to 31 December 1992

[1] First appointed in July 1980.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Figures for expenditure on newspaper and television advertising from 1979-80 to 1983-84 were given in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 25 May 1984, at column *587* and those for 1984-85 were given in answer to another question from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West on 19 December 1985, at column *275*.

Figures for radio advertising and other promotional literature for the years from 1979-80 to 1984-85 were given in answer to questions from the hon. Member on 19 November 1986, at columns *202-4* and the hon. Member was also given in those replies figures for expenditure on newspaper, television and radio advertising and other promotional literature for 1985-86.

Figures for the years 1986-87 to 1990-91, provisional, for total advertising expenditure—all media—and production and distribution of other promotional material were given in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras on 12 March 1990 at columns *23-24*.

Apart from the final year, 1990-91, it would not be possible to provide more detailed information for those

years except at disproportionate cost as stated in a previous answer to a question from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras on 25 April 1991 at columns *535-36*.

Expenditure figures for the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and estimates for 1992-93 are as follows:

	1990-91 (expenditure) £000's	*1991-92 (expenditure) £000's*	*1992-93 (estimate) £000's*
TV advertising	2,024	3,000	4,000
Radio advertising	109	117	196
Newspaper advertising	3,595	2,225	1,380
Prodution and distribution of other promotional material (including poster advertising)	6,750	6,976	8,630

I trust that the hon. Member will recognise that this expenditure is incurred on public information schemes of the kind that are undertaken by any Government Department and do not in any way involve party political campaigning.

Carl Bridgewater

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the safety of the conviction in the Carl Bridgewater trial; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Since 1982 there have been about 200 representations concerning the safety of these convictions from Members of Parliament and members of the public. In 1987, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) referred the cases of Michael Hickey, Vincent Hickey and James Robinson to the Court of Appeal. In 1989, the court concluded that the verdicts were safe and satisfactory.

In June 1991, solicitors acting on behalf of the families of the convicted men submitted a petition to the Secretary of State seeking a further intervention in the case. It was decided that further inquiries should be made and, at the request of the chief constable of Staffordshire, a senior officer from the Merseyside police is currently investigating these representations.

Albany Prison

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the future policy for Her Majesty's prison Albany on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Present plans are for Albany prison to be withdrawn from the dispersal system later this year. Its future role will then be that of a category B non-dispersal training prison.

Police Homes

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance his Department gives to police authorities over the repossession of police homes occupied by the wives and families of policemen from whom the wife is separated or against whom divorce proceedings are under way.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No guidance is currently issued by the Home Office since occupation is a matter for the police authority concerned. However, a joint working party has recently been set up by the two sides of the Police Negotiating Board for the purpose of drawing up guidelines.

Criminal Convictions

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases concerning the safety of criminal convictions are currently being received by his Department.

Mr. Jack: Statistics for the quarter ended 31 March 1992 show that 195 cases of alleged wrongful conviction were received.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the letters to him dated 11 February, 4 March and 16 April from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. Tyrrell at Littlehey Priory.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A reply has been sent to the right hon. Member.

Brixton Gaol (IRA Escape)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish all the inquiries by the police and the Prison Department into the Special Branch operation and the July 1991 escape of the alleged IRA suspect at Brixton gaol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. The recent report by Mr. Bailey, deputy chief constable of Nottinghamshire, was commissioned by the chief constable of Staffordshire. As to earlier reports, I have nothing to add to the various statements made by my predecessor on this matter.

Sam Kulasingham and Prem Sivalasingham

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive a report from the Essex constabulary on their investigations into the convictions of Sam Kulasingham and Prem Sivalasingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Essex police are actively proceeding with their inquiries into this case but the extent of their remaining inquiries makes it difficult, at this stage to give a precise timing for their conclusions.

UKIAS

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the annual level of funding by his Department to UKIAS; and if he will make a statement on the future of that organisation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office paid £1,666,000 grant in aid to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service in 1991-92. This included grant for the service's refugee unit which has now been constituted as a separate body. In respect of the future of UKIAS, I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 18 May 1992, at column *10*.

Buildings at Risk Trust

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Buildings At Risk Trust, based in Derbyshire, has applied to the Charity Commissioners to register as a charity.

Mr. Jack: The Buildings At Risk Trust, a proposed charitable company, has not yet formally applied for registration as a charity to the Charity Commissioners. It has, however, submitted its draft memorandum and articles of association to the commissioners with a view to being registered. The commissioners are currently considering these.

Expatriate Votes

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, when the information becomes available to his Department, he will list by constituency the number of expatriate votes cast in the last general election.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 13 May 1992, at column *116* and to a question from the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 11 May 1992, at column *20*.

Ashford Remand Centre

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his current intentions for the site of the former Ashford, Middlesex, remand centre.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 22 May 1992]*: Our current intention is to redevelop this site by building a new prison for 600 adult males. The date on which construction would begin has yet to be determined.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate, in connection with the decision to demolish Ashford, Middlesex, remand centre and to build a category B prison, the costs of *(a)* the cancellation of the building contract, *(b)* tidying up and seeding the site and *(c)* agreeing and preparing the lease granted to Spelthorne borough council in October 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

(a) no contract to build a new prison on the site at Ashford had been let when it was decided to defer the construction of the prison in November 1990 and so no costs were incurred on this score;

(b) the total cost of clearing and preparing the Ashford site, including the demolition of the remand centre which formerly occupied the site, was £880,000;

(c) it is not possible to quantify the cost of the time spent by officials on agreeing and preparing the lease granted to Spelthorne borough council in October 1991, because it formed only a small part of their overall duties. Other costs, including solicitors' fees, totalled £779·25.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate, in connection with the plans for the Ashford remand centre site, how much has now been offered to Spelthorne borough council to vary the terms of the lease, how much is being spent on seeking to renegotiate the lease and how much extra it will cost to build a new prison on this site.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* Spelthorne borough council was offered £20,000 including VAT, as part of proposals to vary the terms of the lease it currently holds on the site for a new prison at Ashford.

It is not possible to quantify the cost of the time being spent by officials on seeking to renegotiate the lease, because it forms only a small portion of their overall duties.

The current estimated cost of building a new prison on the site is £69 million. The actual cost will depend on when construction actually begins.

Karamjit Singh Chahal

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to release Karamjit Singh Chahal from Bedford prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* I am actively considering Mr. Chahal's case, including the question of his detention and will take a further decision shortly.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* The full cost of staff, accommodation and administration for the Home Office press office from 1979-80 to 1990-91 was:

	£
1979-80	283,140
1980-81	392,532
1981-82	381,799
1982-83	424,290
1983-84	516,362
1984-85	560,512
1985-86	606,996
1986-87	548,136
1987-88	599,282
1988-89	674,945
1989-90	715,646
1990-91	786,519
1991-92	792,125

The estimate cost for 1992-93 is £835,441·38.

Notes:

1. Figures supplied before 1986-87 were the costs estimated by the Treasury. After devolved budgets the estimates are based on Home Office costs.

2. Press Office figures include the costs for staff accommodation and administration costs.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* For information prior to 1990-91, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the then Home Secretary on 1 May 1991, at column *177*. The Home Office spent

approximately £1,686,000 for the financial year 1991-92. There is no centrally determined estimate for expenditure on management consultancies in 1992-93.

Firearms

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many notifiable offences in which shotguns were used took place in each year *(a)* from 1985 and *(b)* in 1992 so far in each police force area.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* The information requested is set out in the table. Information for 1991 and 1992 is not yet available.

Notifiable offences recorded by the Police in which shot guns were reported to have been used.

England and Wales — *Number of offences*

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Avon and Somerset	10	15	16	12	24	26
Bedfordshire	11	15	10	4	9	14
Cambridgeshire	7	11	11	13	24	24
Cheshire	9	9	6	11	12	9
Cleveland	1	3	3	4	2	4
Cumbria	7	2	21	4	7	3
Derbyshire	13	10	15	11	7	11
Devon and Cornwall	23	29	20	16	17	12
Dorset	3	0	0	2	2	3
Durham	8	5	12	6	15	9
Essex	30	28	36	24	25	37
Gloucestershire	0	2	5	6	6	3
Greater Manchester	51	65	87	99	103	87
Hampshire	23	20	11	12	14	21
Hertfordshire	17	19	19	14	22	18
Humberside	8	10	17	18	9	13
Kent	41	34	52	41	57	37
Lancashire	8	16	7	17	8	25
Leicestershire	8	5	12	19	7	8
Lincolnshire	6	8	9	7	6	5
London, City of	5	7	3	1	1	2
Merseyside	35	33	48	61	89	64
Metropolitan	464	441	419	426	447	374
Norfolk	19	22	8	15	11	16
Northamptonshire	7	12	14	16	20	9
Northumbria	24	26	48	45	85	60
North Yorkshire	6	5	12	12	3	20
Nottinghamshire	18	6	7	8	11	17
South Yorkshire	22	17	20	11	22	25
Staffordshire	11	11	9	12	9	9
Suffolk	13	12	10	15	13	8
Surrey	17	16	10	7	14	10
Sussex	16	17	11	10	20	19
Thames Valley	24	43	49	39	28	42
Warwickshire	11	10	7	7	21	4
West Mercia	10	12	11	13	15	12
West Midlands	63	97	87	80	49	50
West Yorkshire	25	21	38	44	30	36
Wiltshire	3	4	5	0	5	2
Dyfed-Powys	9	7	8	16	13	18
Gwent	5	7	6	4	8	5
North Wales	9	9	24	14	10	7
South Wales	5	19	11	10	13	17
England and Wales	1,105	1,160	1,234	1,206	1,313	1,193

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many criminal offences involving shotguns have been domestic incidents in each year from 1985 in each police force area.

Mr. Jack: For offences involving shotguns, information about the relationship between suspect and victim is available only for homicide offences. The number of homicide offences in which the relationship between the suspect and victim was domestic and where a shotgun was used is given in the table, for each police force in England and Wales for each year between 1985 and 1990.

Police force area	*Year* *1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
Avon and Somerset	0	2	0	0	0	1
Bedfordshire	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cheshire	0	1	0	0	0	1
Cleveland	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumbria	0	0	1	0	0	0

Police force area	Year 1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Derbyshire	0	1	1	0	0	0
Devon and Cornwall	0	8	0	1	0	0
Dorset	0	0	0	1	1	1
Durham	1	0	1	0	0	1
Essex	0	0	1	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	1	0	0	0	0
Greater Manchester	1	0	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	2	0	0	0	0	0
Hertfordshire	1	0	0	0	0	0
Humberside	0	0	0	0	2	0
Kent	0	1	2	1	1	0
Lancashire	0	0	0	1	0	1
Leicestershire	0	0	0	1	0	0
Lincolnshire	0	0	1	0	0	0
London, City of	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merseyside	0	0	0	0	0	0
Metropolitan	1	0	2	1	0	2
Norfolk	4	1	0	0	0	0
Northamptonshire	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northumbria	1	0	0	0	0	0
North Yorkshire	1	0	1	0	0	1
Nottinghamshire	2	0	0	0	0	0
South Yorkshire	0	0	1	0	0	1
Staffordshire	0	0	0	0	2	0
Suffolk	1	1	0	1	0	2
Surrey	0	1	0	1	0	0
Sussex	0	0	1	1	1	0
Thames Valley	0	1	0	0	1	0
Warwickshire	0	0	1	0	0	0
West Mercia	0	1	0	1	1	1
West Midlands	0	3	0	0	0	1
West Yorkshire	0	2	0	0	0	1
Wiltshire	0	0	0	0	1	0
Dyfed-Powys	0	0	0	0	1	2
Gwent	0	0	1	0	0	1
North Wales	0	0	0	1	0	0
South Wales	0	0	1	1	0	0
England and Wales	16	24	15	12	11	17

Information for 1991 is not yet available.

Notes:

1. Offences currently recorded as homicide as at 1 September 1991.
2. The term "Domestic" includes the following relationships between victim and suspect: son or daughter; parent; spouse, cohabitant or former spouse or cohabitant; other family; lover or former lover including spouse's lover or lover's spouse or other associate.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of the total work force in his Department are registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Of the total Home Office work force some 0·4 per cent. are registered disabled persons: we have no record of the number of staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register. Specific targets have been set to increase the numbers of staff with disabilities employed in the Department. A departmental working group keeps the position under review and has taken a number of initiatives to promote policies and improve practices.

Knife Offences

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women, who were under the age of 21 years, have been convicted of offences which involved the use of a knife at courts covering the Greater London area for each of the last three years;

(2) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were charged with the use of a knife in a criminal offence at courts in England and Wales during the last three years;

(3) how many people appearing in court in England and Wales were charged with offences which related to the use of a knife in each of the last three years.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* Information available centrally, which is given in the tables, relates only to the number of persons prosecuted and found guilty for possession of knives under the Prevention of Crime Act 1953, section 1 and the Criminal Justice Act 1988, section 139 for the years 1988 to 1990. It is not possible to distinguish centrally whether or not knives have been used for other offences, such as wounding. Information for 1991 is not yet available.

Table A

Number of offenders aged under 21 years who were found guilty of offences of possession of knives in the Metropolitan Police District[1] by sex 1988-90

Offence	Males			Females		
	1988	1989	1990	1988	1989	1990
Possession of offensive weapons without lawful authority or excuse[2]	765	587	400	36	17	11
Having article with blade or point in public place[3]	23	174	180	—	6	7

[1] Including City of London.
[2] Prevention of Crime Act 1953, Section 1.
[3] Criminal Justice Act 1988, Section 139, which came into force in October 1988.

Table B

Number of persons prosecuted in magistrates' courts and found guilty at all courts of offences of possession of knives in England and Wales by sex 1988-90

Offence	Males			Females		
	1988	1989	1990	1988	1989	1990
Possession of offensive weapons without lawful authority or excuse[1]						
Prosecuted	7,487	6,623	5,911	297	264	250
Found guilty	5,572	4,908	4,120	221	189	161
Having article with blade or point in public place[2]						
Prosecuted	145	1,927	2,053	5	90	92
Found guilty	125	1,471	1,508	5	73	69

[1] Prevention of Crime Act 1953, Section 1.
[2] Criminal Justice Act 1988, Section 139, which came into force in October 1988.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by the Duchy of Lancaster since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Waldegrave: No public opinion surveys have been carried out by the Duchy of Lancaster from 1991 to the present day.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total sum paid out in fees by the Duchy of Lancaster's Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Waldegrave: Fees paid to management consultants by the Duchy of Lancaster are as follows:

Period	Amount (£)	Consultant
1979-80	34,097	Peat Marwick
1980-81	Nil	
1981-82	Nil	
1982-83	Nil	
1983-84	Nil	
1984-85	Nil	
1985-86	10,524	M.C.P.
1986-87	28,629	M.C.P.
1987-88	4,185	M.C.P.
1988-89	8,510	M.C.P.
1989-90	6,729	M.C.P.
1990-91	9,555	M.C.P.
1991-92[1]	8,149	M.C.P.
1992-93[2]	8,000	M.C.P.

[1] To date.
[2] Estimate.

Nuclear Structure Facility, Daresbury

Mr. Hall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for what reason the decision to close the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury was taken without any scientific review.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The decision to close the nuclear structure facility was taken by the Science and Engineering Research Council. The council is fully qualified to make such scientific decisions, looking across its programme as a whole.

The council had before it the views of its nuclear physics board which naturally regretted the closure decision but nonetheless reported that keeping the facility in operation beyond 1993 was of lower scientific priority than other claims on the resources available.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster where the current nuclear physics research carried out at the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury will be carried out once the nuclear structure facility closes.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Researchers in this field will have access to a number of facilities in Europe to continue their work, notably those at Mainz and at Legnaro and, in due course, at the Vivitron facility being built at Strasbourg.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many scientists, physicists and support staff will lose their jobs when the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury closes; and what the redundancy cost of the closure will be.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The Science and Engineering Research Council has made clear its commitment to keep compulsory redundancy to the minimum consistent with an orderly run down of the facility. Some redundancies may however prove necessary. The actual number, and costs, will depend on the level of early voluntary retirement, the rate of natural wastage, both at the Daresbury laboratory and elsewhere, and the extent to which retraining and redeployment can be achieved.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much the Science and Engineering Research Council will save by the closure of the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The Science and Engineering Research Council estimates that, after the costs associated with the closure itself have been met, the net saving will be some £5 million a year released for other, higher priority science.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the impact of the proposed closure of the nuclear structure facility at Daresbury on the facility to undertake world-leading nuclear physics research in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The impact of a scientific decision such as this is a matter which the research councils are best placed to assess. The Office of Science and Technology will not seek to make a separate judgment.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total expenditure by Duchy of Lancaster's Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Duchy of Lancaster advertises in some national and local newspapers as part of the administration of intesteces as required by statute. Sums spent and estimates are as follows:

Newspaper advertising	£
1979-80	13,899·34
1980-81	11,779·80
1981-82	14,305·41
1982-83	13,810·77
1983-84	14,456·67
1984-85	9,017·73
1985-86	17,633·63
1986-87	14,715·97
1987-88	11,888·66
1988-89	16,882·72
1989-90	23,222·64
1990-91	26,889·97
[1]1991-92	25,800·00
[1]1992-93	25,000·00

[1] Estimated.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of the total work force in his Department are registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The proportion of registered disabled persons employed by the Cabinet Office is 1·3 per cent. The Cabinet Office is an equal opportunities employer, and continually seeks to encourage the employment of people with disabilities.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is the policy of my Department to pay bills promptly. The timing of payment is normally stipulated in contracts or on suppliers' invoices. Where it is not, the Department's aim is to pay within 30 days of the presentation of a valid invoice.

To help encourage prompt payment by our contractors to their sub-contractors, a clause has been added to the Department's standard terms of contract requiring the contractors to pay their sub-contractors within the same time scale.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—a Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Mr. Waldegrave: The publication has been made available to those staff in my Department, including its executive agencies, who have a particular interest in purchasing or bill paying.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give separate figures for the spending by the Duchy of Lancaster on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Duchy of Lancaster advertises in some national and local newspapers as part of the administration of intesteces as required by statute. Sums spent and estimates are as follows:

	£
Newspaper advertising	
1979-80	13,899·34
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1985-86	17,633·63
1986-87	14,715·97
1987-88	11,888·66
1988-89	16,882·72
1989-90	23,222·64
1990-91	26,889·97
1991-92[1]	25,800·00
1992-93[1]	25,000·00
Television advertising	Nil
Radio advertising	Nil
Other promotional material	Nil

[1] Estimated.

Dr. Bray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he received the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils relating to the 1992 public expenditure survey; if he will publish that advice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I received the Advisory Board for the Research Councils' advice on 1 May. It was offered to me in confidence and I have no plans to publish it.

Dr. Bray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the advice received from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils relating to the 1992 public expenditure survey included a request for the publication of that advice.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Darwen Magistrates Court

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what decision has been reached about the future of Darwen magistrates court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As mentioned in my letter of 27 May 1992 to the hon. Member, the Lord Chancellor has carefully considered the appeal by Lancashire county council against the Lancashire magistrates courts committee's determination to close this courthouse and has found the courts committee's decision to be soundly based; he has therefore dismissed the appeal.

Court Administration Procedures

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he has any plans to review the court administration procedures to encourage better use of both court time and police resources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: We are taking forward a number of measures in both the Crown court and the magistrates courts aimed at better use of court and police resources. These include action to implement the recommendations of the inter-agency working group on pre-trial issues concerning the listing of cases and the communication of information between the courts and other agencies; the creation of a magistrates' courts inspectorate with a brief to promote best practice in this and other areas; and research into delays in the Crown court.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of the total work force in his department is registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: At 1 June 1991 the percentage of people registered as disabled was 1·5 per cent. The figure relates only to those staff registered as disabled. There are other staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register.

The Lord Chancellor's Department is taking steps to implement the civil service code of practice on the employment of people with disabilities. In advertising vacancies, disabled people are encouraged to apply. Application forms are available in braille and on tape. Applicants can take a short answer test if they do not possess the necessary educational qualifications. Interviews are offered to all registered disabled applicants with the necessary qualifications who pass the short answer test. Care is taken to ensure that the criteria for recruitment are defined in terms of the needs of the job and that disabled persons are not unfairly excluded. At the point of selection preference is given to a registered disabled person if otherwise the respective merits of the candidates are evenly based. A budget is available for the purchase of any equipment that might assist a disabled person to carry out a job. Recruiters and managers are given guidance on the employment of people with disabilities.

Jurors

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether a person whose knowledge of the English language is limited is normally appointed to serve as a juror if his or her name comes forward by way of the random process of selection of jury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The summons sent to potential jurors explains that a person may apply for excusal from jury service on the grounds of an insufficient understanding of English. In addition if there is doubt that a person summoned under the Juries Act 1974 would be able to act effectively as a juror on account of an insufficient understanding of English the judge shall determine whether or not he or she should act as a juror. If the judge decides the person cannot act effectively as a juror, the summons shall be discharged.

Legal Aid

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what consultations he has held with the Law Society before issuing the recent circular to justices' clerks concerning the conditions attached to the availability of legal aid for defendants.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. The Law Society had an opportunity to comment on the rules governing the availability of criminal legal aid in 1989 during the passage of regulations associated with the Legal Aid Act 1988. The circular provides advice and guidance to justices' clerks on the administration of criminal legal aid regulations.

Mr. Byers: To ask the the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if his Department has sought any independent legal advice on the lawfulness of their recent circular to justices' clerks concerning the conditions attached to the availability of legal aid for defendants.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department has access to legal advice from a variety of sources, but it is not the normal practice to reveal the source of legal advice in any particular case.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of the implications for duty solicitor schemes of the recent circular from his Department to justices' clerks concerning the conditions attached to the availability of legal aid for defendants.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The circular was not concerned with the operation of the duty solicitor schemes.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what estimate was made of the additional costs incurred as a result of the introduction of his Department's recent circular to justices' clerks concerning the conditions attached to the availability of legal aid of *(a)* cases being adjourned and *(b)* defendants being remanded in custody whilst proof of income is obtained.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. The purpose of the circular was to provide advice and guidance on the proper application of the regulations for the grant of criminal legal aid.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Scottish Heritage

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what jurisdiction he has over the national heritage of Scotland; and how this compares with his responsibilities in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Key: The responsibilities of the Secretary of State for National Heritage in relation to heritage matters in Scotland broadly follow the territorial division of responsibilities which existed prior to the creation of the Department of National Heritage. Responsibilities of the Secretary of State which extend to Scotland are; sponsorship of the National Heritage Memorial Fund; the work of the Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites; the Great Britain Sports Council and the international promotion of British Sport; British Screen Finance; European Co-production Fund; Audio Visual Eureka; Film Certification; the United Kingdom Film Commission; the MEDIA programme; the National Film and Television School; the British Film Institute; the work of the Reviewing Committee on the Export Works of Art; broadcasting; the British Library and the performing arts. He consults the Secretary of State for Scotland on these matters where appropriate.

Responsibility for national museums and galleries, public libraries, acceptance of works of art in lieu of tax, the Government indemnity scheme and tourism in Scotland lies with the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The Secretary of State's responsibilities in Scotland do not extend to the acceptance of property or works of art in satisfaction of tax or the policy and funding of film culture as they do in Wales; otherwise his responsibilities in Wales and Scotland are broadly similar. In Northern Ireland, he does not have responsibility for the performing arts, museums and galleries, libraries, tourism, heritage matters or sport and recreation.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what percentage of the total work force in his Department is registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: This information is not held centrally and at this time could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The Department of National Heritage will be committed to the implementation of the code of practice on the employment of people with disabilities in the civil service.

Welsh Heritage

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement outlining what responsibilities his Department will have regarding heritage issues in Wales.

Mr. Key: The responsibilities of the Secretary of State for National Heritage in relation to Wales broadly follow the territorial division of responsibilities which existed prior to the creation of the Department of National Heritage. Responsibilities of the Secretary of State which extend to Wales include: sponsorship of the National Heritage Memorial Fund; acceptance of property in satisfaction of tax; the work of the Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites; the GB Sports Council and the international promotion of British Sport; British Screen Finance; European Co-production Fund; Audio Visual Eureka; Film Certification; the UK Film Commission; the MEDIA Programme; the National Film and Television School; the Crafts Council; the British Film Institute; policy and funding for film culture; the business sponsorship incentive scheme; acceptance of works of art

in lieu of tax; the work of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art; broadcasting; the performing arts; the British Library and the Public Lending Right. He consults the Secretary of State for Wales on these matters where appropriate.

Responsibility for national museums and galleries, public libraries, the Government indemnity scheme and tourism in Wales lies with the Secretary of State for Wales.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—A Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Mr. Mellor: "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. Guidelines on purchasing by Government Departments already exist and are distributed by Her Majesty's Treasury.

The Department of Employment has been undertaking a survey of prompt payment record of Government Departments during the financial year 1991-92 and the results of this exercise will be published in the near future by the Department of Trade and Industry, which now has responsibility for small firms issues, including late payment. After studying these results the Department will consider what further measures, if any, may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by the public sector.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Mellor: The Department of National Heritage, and its executive agency and non-departmental public bodies are required to pay their bills promptly. The timing of payments should normally be stipulated in contracts. Where there is no contractual provision or other understanding, reimbursement should be made within 30 days of receipt of goods/services or the presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment, whichever is the later.

To help encourage prompt payment of bills by Government contractors to their subcontractors all Government contracts are to contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay its subcontractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the subcontractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Radioactive Seaweed, Cumbria

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the discovery of radioactive seaweed on the beaches of west Cumbria near Sellafield and its possible repercussions on the purity of laver bread eaten in south Wales.

Mr. Curry: In the course of the environmental monitoring programme which the Government require British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) to undertake, material of weed-like appearance, known as hydroids, contaminated with very low levels of radioactivity, has been found on beaches in the Sellafield area. Hydroids are, in fact, inedible animal material similar to coral. We should not expect the findings to have any implication for the food chain, and this is confirmed by recent results from the Ministry's own monitoring programme.

The risk associated with direct exposure of the skin to this material is extremely low. Nevertheless, we require BNFL to clear contaminated material from beaches. The circumstances behind the incident are being investigated and we shall ensure that steps are taken to avoid a recurrence.

Sell-by Dates

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of people prosecuted and convicted for selling food after the date shown in a use-by date relating to it in each year since 1984.

Mr. Soames: This information is not available centrally.

The enforcement of food labelling regulations, including those relating to the date marking of foods, is the responsibility of individuala local authorities.

The requirement to apply use-by date marks was introduced on 1 January 1991. There would have been no prosecutions for the sale of food after the date shown in a use-by date before 1 January 1991.

Bee Diseases

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what success he has had in action against the varroa mite and related bee disease.

Mr. Curry: Following the discovery of varroasis in the United Kingdom on 5 April controls were put in place to minimise the spread of the disease and an extensive survey of apiaries carried out to check the extent of the infestation. An infected area has been declared and movement into or out of that area is prohibited except under licence. Inspection and sampling outside the infected area revealed no evidence of the varroa mite. We are aware, however, that the mite is difficult to detect in the early stages of infestation. We are, therefore, continuing to keep the situation under close review and are prepared to amend the infected area if the disease is found outside its boundaries. The approval of veterinary medicines for the control of varroasis is being expedited.

Sheep Dips

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what conclusions he has reached on the future use of organo-phosphorus sheep dip substances, following consultation with the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Soames: Under the European Community rules, all long-standing licensed pharmaceutical veterinary medicines, including sheep dips, are currently subject to a comprehensive review. The purpose of this review is to ensure that such products meet the most up to date standards on safety, quality and efficacy.

The independent Veterinary Products Committee (VPC) has recently completed the initial phase of its review of sheep dips. It has concluded that, at present, there is no clear evidence that these products cause any unacceptable level of health risk to humans when used in accordance with the label instructions. Nevertheless, the VPC has noted that certain aspects of the products and conditions of use need further evaluation and the companies concerned are being asked to provide additional data. These, together with reports of suspected adverse reactions, will then be considered by the VPC. On the basis of the VPC's advice, decisions will then be taken by the licensing authority on the future authorisation of sheep dip products.

Health and Safety Executive officials attend VPC meetings and are represented on an appraisal panel set up to consider reports of human suspected adverse reactions to sheep dips.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the use of organo-phosphorus sheep dip substances should continue to be authorised and encouraged, that the medical knowledge available to users is adequate for their protection and that the substances should continue to be excluded from control under the pesticide regulations.

Mr. Soames: Sheep dips are classified as veterinary medicines. Before any veterinary medicine can be placed on the market, it must first be licensed in accordance with the Medicines Act 1968. Licences are issued only after the Veterinary Products Committee (VPC) has satisfied itself that the required standards of safety, quality and efficacy have been met. The assessment of safety includes that of operators using the product.

As part of the current review of licensed sheep dip products the VPC has recently advised that, at present, there is no clear evidence that these products cause any unacceptable level of health risk to humans when used in accordance with the label instructions. No medical knowledge is necessary to follow these instructions nor to comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations.

Nevertheless, the VPC has noted a need for further evaluation of certain aspects of these products and conditions of use and the companies concerned have been asked to provide additional information. Information requested includes studies of farm operators, including blood tests and details of protective clothing worn as well as studies to show which areas of the bodies of operators are most exposed. This further data will be considered by the VPC on whose advice decisions on the future authorisation of sheep dip products will be made.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the regulations governing dipping for sheep scab to protect the health of those undertaking this task.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

All sheep dipping operations are subject to the general requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSW Act) and to the more specific requirements of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988. These regulations apply to employers and the self-employed. They require assessment of health risks from chemicals, prevention or control of exposure and, where necessary, health surveillance and exposure monitoring. If the regulations are complied with, the health of those exposed during dipping should not be put at risk.

Employers and operators are responsible for complying with the HSW Act and the regulations. They are vigorously enforced by inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Curry: Public opinion surveys carried out by my Department since 1 November 1991 are as follows:

"Foodsense" information campaign—evaluation research.
"Foodsense" new booklets—evaluation research.
"Joint Imports and Rabies Control"—awareness assessment research.
1992 touring exhibition programme—evaluation research.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Curry: The annual costs of fees paid by the Department (excluding agencies) to management consultants, excluding computer consultants, since 1984-85 are set out in the table. Data for earlier years can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Under decentralised budgeting arrangements in MAFF, there is no central provision for such consultancies in 1992-93. Any which are commissioned will have to be funded from the general running cost allocated to the units concerned. Decisions will therefore be taken as necessary during the year.

Financial year	*Expenditure (£)*
1984-85	27,110
1985-86	174,724
1986-87	135,279
1987-88	44,015
1988-89	162,114
1989-90	143,150
1990-91	129,817
1991-92	441,351

Farmed Fish

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals for the introduction of a welfare code in respect of farmed fish; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Welfare standards for farmed fish are expected to be developed in the Council of Europe. We will participate constructively in these negotiations.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Curry: The information required for the financial years 1979-80 to 1983-84 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The figures for subsequent years are as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	3·2
1985-86	3·5
1986-87	3·0
1987-88	0·6
1988-89	0·8
1989-90	1·1
1990-91	0·5
1991-92	0·6
1992-93	[1]0·6

[1]Forecast.

Figures for the years 1984-85 to 1986-87 refer to the total cost of press services and paid publicity which could be separated to show expenditure on press services only at disproportionate cost. Figures for 1987-88 to 1992-93 relate to press services alone.

Bio-fuels

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to promote further research into the production and viability of bio-fuels as an alternative agricultural product; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Government conduct some research into potential biofuel crops, the scale of which is kept under review. However, whether biofuels are produced and marketed will ultimately depend on the economics. At present biofuels such as biodiesel cost about three times as much to produce as fuels from conventional sources.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money was granted to farmers in England and Wales through the ESA scheme in 1990-91.

Mr. Curry: The total amount paid to farmers under the ESA scheme in England and Wales during 1990-91 was £8,341,000.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of the total work force in his Department is registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department employs 141·5 (1·4 per cent.) staff who are registered as disabled, counting part-timers as half units. These figures do not include staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register.

The Department is fully committed to the policies and good employment practices set out in the code of practice on the employment of people with disabilities in the civil service. Officials are making every effort to ensure that both policies and practices are implemented effectively and sensitively, in order to increase access for people with disabilities to the full range of recruitment and career development opportunities available, irrespective of whether they have chosen to register. The Department also participates in schemes designed to increase opportunities for the employment and retention of people with disabilities such as the sheltered placement scheme.

Farm Diversification

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money was granted to farmers in England and Wales through the farm diversification scheme in 1990-91; and if he will give a breakdown of this expenditure between the various activities eligible for grants.

Mr. Soames: A total of £2,765,691 was paid in grants under the farm diversification grant scheme in England and Wales in 1990-91. A breakdown of these figures by the various eligible enterprises is set out in the table.

Grant paid to farmers in England and Wales by eligible enterprise 1990-91

Enterprise type	*Grant paid £*
Manufacture of craft items	20,595
Food processing	237,288
Timber processing	28,482
Non-food agricultural produce	76,110
Repair of agricultural machinery	5,635
Farm shops	197,264
Pick your own sales	9,530
Tourist accommodation	1,376,741
Catering	83,629
Recreation and education	346,977
Horse enterprises	184,487
Letting of land or buildings for any of the above	89,606
Sub-total	2,656,344
Feasibility and marketing grants	109,347
Total	2,765,691

Abattoirs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to use a different health mark for meat produced from low-throughput abattoirs and those operating under temporary structural derogations.

Mr. Soames: Meat fit for human consumption produced in low throughput abattoirs and abattoirs operating under temporary structural derogations will be given the national health mark.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—a Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Mr. Curry: "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. Guidelines on purchasing by Government Departments already exist and are distributed by Her Majesty's Treasury.

The Department of Employment has been undertaking a survey of prompt payment record of Government Departments during the financial year 1991-92 and the results of this exercise will be published in the near future by the Department of Trade and Industry, which now has responsibility for small firms issues, including late payment. After studying these results the Department will consider what further measures, if any, may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by the public sector.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Curry: Government Departments, including their executive agencies, are required to pay their bills promptly. The timing of payment should normally be stipulated in Government contracts. Where there is no contractual provision or other understanding, departments should pay within 30 days of receipt of goods/services or the presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment, whichever is the later.

To help encourage prompt payment of bills by Government contractors to their subcontractors all Government contracts are to contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay its subcontractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the subcontractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

Pig Slurry

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what domestic or EC proposals he expects to be made to make the disposal of all pig slurry subject to compulsory processing through registered processing plants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I know of no such proposals.

Flora and Fauna

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals on the protection of flora and fauna have been put forward by his Department for inclusion in the United Kingdom submissions for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil in June.

Mr. Curry: Protection of flora and fauna is an important feature of the recently completed biodiversity convention and the agenda 21 proposals which will be before the conference. The lead on this is taken by the Department of the Environment, but our officials have been active in helping to achieve constructive proposals.

Veal Crates

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many calves have been exported from Britain to be reared in veal crates in EC countries since veal crate farming was banned in Britain.

Mr. Soames: During the period 1 January 1990 to 2 May 1992, a total of 839,820 calves intended for further fattening were exported from Great Britain to other EC countries. It is not possible to determine what proportion were for rearing in veal crates.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Curry: Expenditure by the Department in the financial year 1982-83 and each subsequent year was as follows:

	(a) *TV*	*(b)* *Radio*	*(c)* *Press advertising*	*(d)* *Other publicity material*
	£	£	£	£
1982-83	nil	nil	3,000	n/a
1983-84	nil	nil	27,000	n/a
1984-85	nil	nil	26,000	575,000
1985-86	nil	nil	29,000	656,000
1986-87	nil	nil	54,000	825,000
1987-88	nil	nil	12,000	693,000
1988-89	nil	nil	380,000	1,004,000
1989-90	nil	nil	116,000	2,373,000
1990-91	nil	nil	53,000	2,379,000
1991-92	159,000	nil	103,000	4,135,000
[1]1992-93	500,000	nil	203,774	3,783,226

[1] Forecast.

Figures for publicity advertising prior to 1982-83 are not available as the information for those years includes recruitment and other types of advertising. Information is not readily available to distinguish between expenditure on advertising in newspapers and that in the press generally. Separate figures for expenditure on other publicity material prior to 1984-85 are available only at disproportionate cost.

Vitamin Pills

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about EC proposals to reclassify vitamin pills from food supplements to medicines available on doctor's prescriptions only.

Mr. Soames: The question of establishing acceptable upper levels for vitamins and minerals as a possible basis

for future legislation is under consideration by the EC Scientific Committee for Food. We do not expect the Commission to make proposals on possible controls on vitamins or mineral pills until that process is complete.

Alcoholic Drinks

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring his Department carries out of the alcoholic strength of spirits on sale in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: The monitoring of the alcoholic strength of spirits at retail level is the responsibility of local food authorities, which undertake routine monitoring of alcoholic drinks.

WALES

Ancient Woodlands

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement about changes affecting the area of ancient semi-natural woodland since 1962;

(2) if he will make it part of his planning policy to prevent any further loss of ancient semi-natural woodland.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment today.

Rural Initiative

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made with the rural initiative launched by the Welsh Office; if he will detail specific changes of policy and specific additional resources associated with this initiative; and what is his future plan of action for taking this initiative forward.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Secretary of State announced the launch of the rural initiative in February 1991, when he confirmed a £20 million increase in resources to tackle the problems of rural Wales. Around 75 per cent. of that sum was targeted on additional housing provision, assistance for local authority projects, and higher spending by the Welsh Development Agency. The balance of £5 million was made available for capital projects put forward by authorities which were likely to be of most benefit to the development of rural communities.

Subsequently, my right hon. Friend and I undertook extensive consultations with local authorities, the various agencies and other representative bodies, to seek their views on a way forward for rural Wales in the 1990s. We were very much encouraged by the unanimity of support for the initiative, and published in December 1991 "The Rural Initiative—putting the heart into rural Wales", the document which set out our objectives and policies for rural Wales.

My right hon. Friend also announced at the same time a fresh series of measures to consolidate and take forward rural programmes across the economic, social and environmental fields. In addition to already announced extra funds for the Development Board for Rural Wales and the national parks, totalling over £3 million, a further £29 million has thus been made available for capital projects, rural housing provision, and extra resources for the WDA, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Wales tourist board.

Turning specifically to the capital grants scheme, the total allocation for 1992-93 is £6 million, a 20 per cent. increase on the first year, when 265 applications were submitted by authorities and 36 approved for funding. For the current year, 308 applications were received and successful projects put forward by west Wales authorities have been announced. We hope shortly to be in a position to confirm successful applications for the rest of Wales for the current year.

I am writing to the hon. Gentleman to provide fuller details of the policies and additional resources associated with this initiative.

With the introduction of these measures, I believe we now have a very powerful range of organisations and resources to press ahead vigorously with development of the economic, social and environmental fabric of rural Wales, and to secure for it the long-term prosperity which is our common objective. Our policies for rural areas will continue to be reviewed in response to identified demands, as of course they are for the whole of Wales.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—a Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Mr. David Hunt: "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. Guidelines on purchasing by Government Departments already exist and are distributed by HM Treasury.

The Department of Employment has been undertaking a survey of prompt payment record of Government Departments during the financial year 1991-92 and the results of this exercise will be published in the near future by the Department of Trade and Industry, which now has responsibility for small firms issues, including late payment. After studying these results, the Department will consider what further measures, if any, may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by the public sector.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. David Hunt: Government Departments, including their executive agencies, are required to pay their bills promptly. The timing of payment should normally be stipulated in Government contracts. Where there is no contractual provision or other understanding, Departments should pay within 30 days of receipt of goods/services or the presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment, whichever is the later.

Dentists

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what representations he has received on the state of morale among national health service dentists in Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received from national health service dentists in Wales concerning a new fee structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received a number of letters from general dental practitioners concerning the general dental service. The proposed reduction in fees which was announced in February has been suspended, and discussions are taking place between health departments and the dental professions' representatives to review the level of payments in 1991-92. The results of these discussions are to be announced as soon as possible. A fundamental review of the system for dental remuneration is also being jointly undertaken with the profession.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many national health service dentists there are in Wales;

(2) how many dentists practise in the county of Clwyd.

Mr. David Hunt: The requested information is given in the table.

	Wales	Clwyd
General Dental Practitioners[1]		
Unrestricted principals	815	109
Assistants	9	—
Vocational trainees	29	7
Hospital Dental Staff[2]	119	7
Community Dental Staff[2]	121	15

[1] Provisional figures as at 31 March 1992.
[2] All grades of permanent staff (excluding clinical assistants) in post as at 30 September 1990.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many national health service dentists in Wales have notified him of their intention to enter private practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: None. Dentists who wish to cease providing NHS treatment are required to give notice to either the family health services authority with which they are in contract or, in the case of hospital or community dentists, their employing authority.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what meetings he has had with the leaders of national health service dentists in Wales concerning fee structures.

Mr. David Hunt: NHS dentists in Wales are represented in negotiations which are conducted with health departments, including the Welsh Office, at United Kingdom level. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has agreed to meet elected representatives of the profession in Wales when the outcome of the current negotiations is known.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many national health service dentists have left the service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not available but the table gives the number of dentists in Wales for each of the last five available years:

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
General Dental Practitioners[1]						
Unrestricted principals	769	781	799	809	797	815
Assistants	11	17	28	28	8	9
Vocational trainees	[3]n.a.	[3]n.a.	[3]n.a.	[3]n.a.	[3]27	[3]29
Hospital dental staff[2]	112	100	112	119	[3]n.a.	[3]n.a.
Community dental staff[2]	127	127	119	121	[3]n.a.	[3]n.a.

[1] As at 30 September except for 1992 which are provisional figures as at 31 March.
[2] All grades of permanent staff (excluding clinical assistants) in post as at 30 September.
[3] Means not available.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have received dental treatment in Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not available, but the total number of courses of dental treatment is given in the table:

Courses of dental treatment (thousands)

	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
General dental service:					
Adults	1,135·5	1,167·0	1,266·6	1,197·1	1,189·9
Children	623·4	621·3	634·7	620·6	[1]n/a
Community Dental Service	75·8	73·3	66·2	60·6	54·3
Hospital Dental Service					
New Out-patients	38·3	40·5	42·3	44·4	47·1

[1] The number of courses of treatment for children is no longer available as dentists are now paid on a per capita basis. However at 31 March 1992 there were 361,498 children registered with a dentist in Wales which represents 55 per cent. of the population of under-18s.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dental practices have gone bankrupt in Wales over the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Statistics relating to bankruptcies are collected by the Department of Trade and Industry and published by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce. The detailed information requested is not

available from this source. Figures for Wales are combined with those for England and dental practices are not identified separately.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on (*a*) television advertising, (*b*) radio advertising, (*c*) newspaper advertising and (*d*) other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: The available information is as follows:

Welsh Office publicity spend

£000

Year	Radio	TV	Joint press and TV	Press	Other
1979-80	Nil	—	61	—	24
1980-81	Nil	—	62	—	22
1981-82	Nil	—	100	—	44
1982-83	Nil	—	99	—	38
1983-84	Nil	—	108	—	34
1984-85	Nil	—	66	—	100
1985-86	Nil	Nil	—	31	92
1986-87	Nil	27	—	40	331
1987-88	Nil	39	—	191	613
1988-89	Nil	64	—	112	1,103
1989-90	Nil	37	—	324	1,228
1990-91	Nil	17	—	351	1,161
1991-92	Nil	4	—	221	1,332

[1] Television and Press advertising for the years 1979-85 cannot be readily separated.
[2] Provisional outturn.

Publicity expenditure in 1992-93 is expected to be about £2 million. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of this under each heading because in many cases decisions about the extent to which different media will be used are taken as projects develop.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what weekly payment is made by training and enterprise councils in Wales to participants in the enterprise allowance scheme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The TECs have considerable discretion to respond to local needs in operating the enterprise allowance scheme and the weekly payments may be in the range of £20 to £90 for duration from 66 weeks to 26 weeks.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fluoride

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress that has been made in artificially increasing the fluoride content of the water supply during the most recent 12-month period for which information is available.

Mr. Hanley: No water fluoridation schemes have been implemented in the past 12 months. Following approval in principle by the Department of Health and Social Services, public consultation has taken place on the fluoridation of Dunore Point water scheme. Confirmation of the approval, and approval in principle to the fluoridation of a further scheme at Silent Valley, should be given shortly.

BSE

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the trend of evidence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in livestock.

Mr. Hanley: The incidence of BSE in Northern Ireland is very low. Up to 21 May 1992 only 414 cases have been confirmed in a herd of 1·3 million cattle. The incidence of the disease is expected to increase for at least a further year when it is hoped that the ban on feeding ruminant-derived protein should begin to show visible results.

Weekly Newspapers

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply of 18 May, *Official Report*, column 37, which printing houses in Northern Ireland were directed to the attention of the local enterprise development unit in connection with the grant application by *The Cross Examiner*, before LEDU approved the grant of £16,000.

Mr. Atkins: The grant application contained financial projections based on a price quoted by Ronan Press.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Mates: The following public opinion surveys have been carried out since 1 November 1991:

Northern Ireland Continuous Household Survey
Household Survey on Ownership of Smoke Detectors
Road Safety Advertising Recall
Road Safety Monitor
Rate Collection Agency—opinion survey in respect of service to the public
Lower Ormeau Training Needs Survey
Lower Duncairn Residents and Businesses Survey
Belfast Residents' Survey
Training & Employment Agency Customer Attitude Survey
Social Security Agency—survey of customer opinion of the services provided.

Ards Hospital

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many patients are presently in Boyd house at the Ards hospital; what capacity is unused at present; and if he will make a statement on the future of Boyd house.

Mr. Hanley: There are 37 patients in Boyd house, and 15 beds are presently unoccupied. The organisation of services at local level is a matter for health and social services boards. The Eastern board is currently reviewing its acute hospital services and intends to issue a public consultation document within the next three to four weeks. The outcome of this review will have a bearing on the future role of the Ards hospital in the provision of services to elderly people.

Agricultural Colleges

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students are attending each of the agricultural colleges in the current year; and what were the equivalent figures five years ago.

Mr. Hanley: The total number of students and trainees enrolled on full-time, part-time and short, in-service training courses in the 1986-87 and 1991-92 academic years was as follows:

		Full-time courses	*Part-time courses*	*Short courses*	[12] *All courses*
Enniskillen College of Agriculture	1986-87	42	19	[1]389	450
	1991-92	40	54	[2]658	752
Greenmount College of Agriculture and Horticulture	1986-87	230	55	[1]781	1,066
	1991-92	247	194	[2]2,089	2,530
Loughry College of Agriculture and Food Technology	1986-87	199	37	[1]1,414	1,650
	1991-92	270	219	[2]3,015	3,504
All colleges	1986-87	471	111	[1]2,584	3,166
	1991-92	557	467	[2]5,762	6,786

[1] 1987 calendar year.
[2] Provisional.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Mates: The information requested is as follows:

Year	Expenditure (£)
1979-80	281,641
1980-81	344,596
1981-82	393,239
1982-83	519,912
1983-84	482,188
1984-85	528,666
1985-86	701,685
1986-87	684,727
1987-88	783,771
1988-89	3,622,972
1989-90	4,226,581
1990-91	5,699,510
1991-92	5,701,719
1992-93	[1]6,048,241

[1] Budget.

Airport Privatisation

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library the Hambros Bank Ltd report on the privatisation of Northern Ireland airports commissioned by his Department.

Mr. Atkins: I am unable to do so for a number of reasons. The Hambros report is confidential to the Government and any disclosure of the facts or opinions contained in the report may be commercially damaging to Northern Ireland Airports Limited and may adversely affect the terms upon which privatisation can be achieved. The report also contains information of a security sensitive nature.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of the total work force in his Department are registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: At 22 May 1992 there were 1,272 staff in the Northern Ireland civil service—4·3 per cent. of the service—who reported themselves as having a disability. Of these 443—1·5 per cent. of the service—were, or had been, registered as disabled. In addition, 45 registered disabled people were working in the Northern Ireland civil service under the sheltered placement scheme. No-one currently in the small home civil service staff group in the Northern Ireland Office is registered disabled.

As equal opportunities employers the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland civil service—NICS—encourage people with disabilities to apply for appointment. This is emphasised in all recruitment campaigns and advertising. Qualifications are waived for registered disabled persons for all posts in the NICS which include an aptitude test as part of the selection procedure. Every effort is made to enable people with disabilities to present themselves to best advantage and practical arrangements are made where required, for example, test papers in Braille or enlarged print, use of interpreters and so on. Where the merits of candidates are evenly balanced at interview, preference is given to a registered disabled person. Recruiting officers in the Northern Ireland Office receive disability awareness training, and all disabled applicants who meet the criteria are automatically invited for interview.

There is a comprehensive code of practice, "The Employment of Disabled People in the Northern Ireland Civil Service", a copy of which is included in the third report of the service's equal opportunities unit published in October 1989, and is available in the Library.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing

organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Mates: The director of the Government Purchasing Service for Northern Ireland, formerly the central unit on purchasing (Northern Ireland), issued a directive on payments policy to all purchasing staff across the Northern Ireland civil service and related non-departmental public bodies on 28 December 1989. This stated that all public sector buying organisations should implement a declared commercially acceptable payment policy. The recommended policy was to have quick payment where prompt payment discount was offered and to pay after a stated interval of between 30 and 60 days without a discount.

Reviews of payment performance since that date have shown that the payment of bills is no longer an identifiable problem for public sector suppliers in Northern Ireland.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—A Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Mr. Atkins: The publication has been circulated to the Department of Economic Development and to the local enterprise development unit, the organisation responsible for the promotion and development of small firms within Northern Ireland. The document is available at LEDU's headquarters and in each of its seven regional offices.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Mates: The information could be obtained in the form requested only at disproportionate cost. The total figures for spending on all advertising and other promotional material are, however, set out in the table:

	£
1979-80	468,972
1980-81	487,393
1981-82	613,464
1982-83	1,550,896
1983-84	2,853,451
1984-85	2,699,659
1985-86	3,916,824
1986-87	3,787,628
1987-88	4,028,259
1988-89	4,606,655
1989-90	5,227,759
1990-91	5,886,796
1991-92	7,387,167
1992-93	[1]7,988,100

[1] Budget.

Cohesion Fund

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funding has been allocated to the cohesion fund within the context of the agreement between the European Community and EFTA countries; when it becomes operational; how many applications for support from the cohesion fund have been submitted from Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: The EC/EFTA treaty which was signed on 2 May and comes into force on 1 January 1993 will bring the EFTA countries into the Communities' single internal market. The treaty includes provision for a financial mechanism aimed to assist certain member states and less favoured regions to cope with the competitive pressures arising from the agreement and to contribute to the reduction of regional, social and economic disparity. The island of Ireland including Northern Ireland will benefit from this assistance.

Two types of financial assistance will be available under this mechanism in the form of interest rebates on loans and direct grants. The total volume of loans for which interest rebate will be available will be 1,500 million ecu. The total amount of grant available will be 500 million ecu.

The assistance will be disbursed through the European investment bank and particular emphasis will be placed on the environment, transport, education and training. The allocation of the assistance between member states will be decided by the Community.

When financial allocations are known suitable projects will be submitted.

Teachers (Early Retirement)

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what criteria are used in determining whether teachers in the controlled sector taking early retirement can receive added years or other enhancement of pension;

(2) what criteria are used in determining whether teachers in the maintained sector taking early retirement can receive added years or other enhancement of pension; by whom the decision is taken; and what report of such decisions is made to the Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: In the case of controlled and maintained schools with fully delegated budgets, decisions on pension enhancement are taken by boards of governors; in the case of special schools and schools with partially delegated budgets, decisions are taken by the education and library boards in respect of the controlled sector, by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools—CCMS—in respect of Catholic maintained schools and by the boards of governors of non-Catholic maintained schools.

In taking these decisions, boards of governors, education and library boards and the CCMS take account of guidance issued by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland, which recommends maximum levels of compensation related to years of service and which contains points to be considered when awarding pensions and lump sum enhancements. These include: whether enhancement is necessary to achieve the premature retirement; whether the full level of enhancement provided for is justified; the circumstances leading to the teacher becoming a candidate for premature retirement; the teacher's effectiveness; factors relating to the school's organisation and management.

Enhancement decisions also take account of guidance issued by the relevant education and library board and the CCMS and of the total cash made available by my Department to the board for the premature retirement compensation scheme.

The various deciding authorities notify the Department of Education of the name of the teacher, the date on which premature retirement is to take effect, and the level of enhancement.

Maghaberry Prison

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on events in the female wing of Maghaberry prison on 2 March.

Mr. Mates: Following the receipt of information that a serious breach of security may have occurred, it was necessary to initiate a full search of Mourne house and its inmates.

Difficulties arose on 2 March because a number of prisoners decided to resist the legitimate attempts of staff to undertake the search in accordance with the prescribed procedures for such searches. Because of their resistance it was necessary, physically, to restrain them in order to facilitate the search. This was achieved without serious injury to the prisoners. Two members of the board of visitors and a prison chaplain were present throughout the search.

Full searching is an essential component of prison security policy which is practised not only in the United Kingdom but in the Republic of Ireland, in western European countries and in the USA.

Rural Development

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the members of the Rural Development Council; and what criteria were employed to select the most deprived rural areas for the purposes of the rural development initiative.

Mr. Hanley: The membership of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council is as follows:

Jimmy Armstrong
Executive Chairman

Pat Jess
Open University Lecturer

John Kelly
Lending Manager, Allied Irish Bank

Aideen McGinley
Member of Community Development Review Group

Patsy McShane
Chief Executive, Workspace (Draperstown) Ltd.

Malcolm Woods
Chief Executive, Leckpatrick Holdings Ltd.

Robert Hanna
Deputy Chairman, Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC)

Mark Conway
Chairman, Rural Community Network

John Donaghy
Chairman, Omagh Forum for Community Associations

Paul McAllister
Chairman, Glens of Antrim Rural and Community Development Association

John McGrady
Member of Rural Community Network

John Fee
Newry and Mourne District Council

Warren Loane
Fermanagh District Council

Malachy McSparran
Moyle District Council

Hugh Linehan
Vice President, Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU)

Wilfred Mitchell
Chairman, Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association (NIAPA)

The most deprived rural areas of Northern Ireland—West Fermanagh, the Sperrins, the western shore of Lough Neagh, South Armagh/South Down and the glens of Antrim/Rathlin—were identified by the interdepartmental committee on rural development—IDCRD—after the application of combinations of standard criteria used to assess social and economic need, including geographic and social isolation, high unemployment, demographic imbalances, declining services and poor facilities. The IDCRD also established that pockets of deprivation can be isolated in most rural areas on a ward or townland basis.

EDUCATION

Law Examinations

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will arrange for the Law Society final examination and the Bar final examination to be treated in the same way as the post graduate certificate of education in respect of eligibility for mandatory awards.

Mr. Forman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 22 May 1992 at col. *265*.

Postgraduate Degrees

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will state *(a)* how many people were awarded undergraduate degrees by United Kingdom institutions in each year from 1974 to date, *(b)* how many people commenced postgraduate degree courses in each of these years and *(c)* how many of those commencing courses were in receipt of Government-funded postgraduate awards.

Mr. Forman: The number of undergraduates awarded degrees from United Kingdom higher education institutions were as follows:

	Number
1980-81	105,000
1981-82	102,000
1982-83	100,500
1983-84	116,000
1984-85	121,400
1985-86	121,200
1986-87	124,700
1987-88	127,300
1988-89	129,600

The number of students commencing postgraduate degree courses at higher education institutions in the United Kingdom for each of the academic years 1979-80 to 1990-91 were as follows:

	Number
1979-80	55,400
1980-81	56,000
1981-82	59,900
1982-83	57,500
1983-84	61,000
1984-85	63,600
1985-86	68,500
1986-87	73,000
1987-88	74,000
1988-89	78,900
1989-90	85,400
1990-91	98,000

The figures for postgraduate students in receipt of Government-funded awards were as follows:

	Number
1979-80	10,500
1980-81	10,400
1981-82	9,300
1982-83	9,100
1983-84	9,000
1985-86	9,500
1986-87	9,300
1987-88	8,700
1988-89	8,700
1989-90	9,400

Sparsholt Agricultural College

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects loan sanction to be given for the first stage of the expenditure by Sparsholt agricultural college, Hampshire to provide additional library and classroom facilities.

Mr. Forth: Hampshire education authority's bid for a supplementary credit approval for 1992-93 for major building works at Sparsholt college, including additional library and classroom facilities, is currently being considered along with bids from other authorities. Decisions on the bids will be announced shortly.

School Buildings, Rossendale

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will take into account the severe weather conditions in the Rossendale Valley in future capital allocations for school buildings.

Mr. Forth: Capital resources for local authority maintained schools are distributed on the basis of national priority criteria. These criteria—which were agreed with local authority associations—give priority to the second and third year costs of work approved under earlier allocations, new school places needed in areas of population growth, and projects to remove surplus places. The remaining resources are then largely distributed to contribute towards the cost of all other capital work including improvement and replacement projects. Local authorities are responsible for the state of their school buildings, and for deciding expenditure levels and priorities from the resources available to them.

For voluntary aided schools, governors are responsible for effecting repairs to school buildings and the Secretary of State is under a duty to provide grant of 85 per cent. towards the cost of such. Applications for approval to carry out repairs are dealt with throughout the year as the need arises and are not covered by the annual capital allocations system.

Bids for capital grant from grant-maintained schools are looked at on their individual merits in direct competition with those received from the other grant-maintained schools. Priority in making allocations is given to work required on urgent health and safety grounds.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Forman: Since 1 November 1991, the Department has agreed to make a contribution from the research budget towards the family expenditure survey 1992-93.

Nursery Education, Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the relevant indicators and factors relating to nursery education giving rise to the relevant standard spending assessment for Hampshire for 1992-93; and how much Hampshire county council has budgeted for that purpose.

Mr. Forth: The under-five education element of Hampshire's standard spending assessment for 1992-93 is £24·83 million. The indicators used in calculating this element are resident population aged 0-4, an additional educational needs factor and a factor for additional employment costs made on a regional basis. For Hampshire the values of these indicators are 103,485, 0·40505 and 1·05248 respectively.

It is for Hampshire county council to determine its spending priorities between and within services, including the level of its provision for nursery education.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Forman: The expenditure figures for press and publicity by this Department for the financial years 1984-85 to 1992-93 are given in the table. Figures for 1979-80 to 1983-84 are not available on a comparable basis. The Department does not incur expenditure on public relations.

Year	£000
1984-85	788·8
1985-86	1,026·3
1986-87	1,937·8
1987-88	2,313·6
1988-89	2,336·2
1989-90	2,596·0
1990-91	2,106·5
1991-92	5,822·8
[1]1992-93	2,950·1

[1] Estimated.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Forman: The information requested is as follows:

	£ thousands
1984-85	[1]40
1985-86	18
1986-87	23
1987-88	255
1988-89	165
1989-90	377
1990-91	366
1991-92	[1]460
1992-93	[2]353

[1] Estimated.
[2] Includes budgets for sport and science which transfer to other departments in 1992-93 financial year.

Note: Information for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—A Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Mr. Forman: "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. Guidelines on purchasing by Government Departments already exist and are distributed by Her Majesty's Treasury.

The Department of Employment has been undertaking a survey of the prompt payment record of Government Departments during the financial year 1991-92 and the results of this exercise will be published in the near future by the Department of Trade and Industry, which now has responsibility for small firms issues, including late payment. After studying these results, that Department will consider what further measures, if any, may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by the public sector.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Forman: Government Departments, including their executive agencies, are required to pay their bills promptly. This Department's normal payment terms, unless others are stipulated contractually, are 30 days following receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment. The Department's contracts now contain a clause requiring suppliers to pay their sub-contractors promptly.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Forman: The expenditure figures for advertising and other promotional materials by this Department for the financial years 1979-80 to 1991-92 are given in the table. The 1992-93 estimated budget is £4 million. Final decisions on media in the current financial year have not been taken.

Year	*TV £'000*	*Radio £'000*	*Newspapers £'000*	*Other £'000*
1979-80	—	—	91·6	12·2
1980-81	—	—	8·9	58·3
1981-82	—	—	86·9	49·9
1982-83	—	—	6·0	33·7
1983-84	—	—	9·6	74·9
1984-85	—	—	18·5	150·6
1985-86	—	—	14·8	184·1
1986-87	—	—	532·0	533·0
1987-88	—	—	280·0	1,459·0
1988-89	—	40·0	475·0	1,156·0
1989-90	—	11·8	238·0	1,150·0
1990-91	1,100·0	97·0	1,407·0	1,916·0
1991-92	800·0	—	2,237·9	5,842·7

Asthma

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice is given to schools concerning children who suffer from asthma in regard to the levels of pollution surrounding schools.

Mr. Forth: Medical paediatric advice is available to schools and to LEAs from the district health authority's community child health service. Individual children with asthma may be seen with their parents when advice may be given to the child and family, the teacher and the school with regard to the management in a particular case.

The child's general medical practitioner who has responsibility for his or her medical care, or the hospital paediatrician in more severe cases, may also give advice not only to the child and family but to the teacher and school.

The level of pollution in a particular area is a local matter and therefore the responsibility of the local director of public health and environmental health officer of the local authority. Those officers are available to offer or provide advice to the LEA or to individual schools through and with the community child health service.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the current indications of the number of schools facing shortages of funds due to the funding for teachers' salaries being calculated on an average rather than actual basis.

Mr. Forth: I have seen no evidence to suggest that many schools are facing shortage of funds as a result of the relative costs of their teachers. Local management of

schools—LMS—means that schools that attract and retain pupils receive more money, and gives governing bodies the power to decide how best to spend that money for the benefit of pupils—including how many and which teachers to employ.

Student Loans and Awards

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to lay before the House revised mandatory awards regulations and student loans regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has laid the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1992 before Parliament today. Together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, he has also laid before Parliament the Education (Student Loans) Regulations 1992.

The mandatory awards regulations come into force on 1 September and the loans regulations on 1 August.

The awards regulations apply to students living in England and Wales. They incorporate the unchanged main rates of grant, uprated supplementary allowances and revised contribution scales. These were announced by my predecessor on 9 March at columns *385-87*. They also incorporate some minor changes in terms and conditions.

The loans regulations, which apply to students in Great Britain, provide for the new, higher rates of loan. They also include the 1992-93 income threshold governing the deferment of repayments. Borrowers who satisfy the Student Loans Company that their gross monthly income is £1,130 a month or less, equivalent to £13,560 a year, will be entitled to defer repayments for a year at a time.

Technology

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to review the content of national curriculum technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have agreed, in the light of the advice that I have received from the National Curriculum Council, that there is a case for a detailed review of the statutory order for technology in the national curriculum. The principal objectives of such a review will be to specify more clearly the skills and knowledge which pupils should acquire at each stage so that progression can be secured, to enhance the practical element, and to improve the manageability of the curriculum in the classroom. We are therefore asking Her Majesty's inspectors of schools to undertake an urgent review of the relevant statements of attainment and programmes of study, to allow Her Majesty's chief inspectors of schools for England and for Wales, when appointed, to report to us jointly in the autumn.

I am determined to increase teachers' expectations of childrens' abilities. This is vital for children and for their eventual employers. The more that children are encouraged to achieve the better their employment prospects.

The terms of reference of the review will be as follows:

1. To review the programmes of study for attainment targets 1-4 of the Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in Technology) Order 1990 so as to clarify what should be taught and in particular to ensure that the technical skills, knowledge and understanding of all pupils at all stages are developed through work with and in relation to construction materials and related components and systems.

2. To revise the existing statements of attainment and related non-statutory examples to facilitate the assessment of the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired by pupils and of the quality of their work and what they produce, and in particular to

—identify and specify the skills and knowledge which pupils should acquire at each of the key stages, and indicate where appropriate how these could be developed through a range of technological activities;

—identify and specify the range, depth and level of teaching and learning appropriate to the skills and knowledge at each key stage, so that progression is secured;

—in the light of the above, to propose the apportionment of an appropriate range of materials and contexts across and within the four key stages; giving particular attention to reducing the complexity and amount of work required in each key stage, and to improving the manageability of the curriculum and assessment, particularly at the primary level;

—clarify how and when the skills, knowledge and understanding developed through other Curriculum Orders should be made use of in Technology (eg mathematics, science and art).

3. To design a framework for short courses at key stage 4, which maintains the basic conceptual approach of the Order, but offers within it a range of choices able to meet the needs of pupils of different interests and abilities and flexible enough to permit extension into or combination with other—particularly vocationally-oriented—areas of work or study.

On completion of the review my right hon. Friend and I will prepare our proposals for a new statutory order governing national curriculum technology, which will be subject to the full statutory process of consultation provided for in the Education Reform Act 1988. We would expect it to be possible for a revised order to be implemented in the schools in August 1994 for key stages 1, 2 and 3 (pupils up to 14) and in August 1995 for key stage 4 (14-16 year olds). In the meantime, the existing curriculum order will continue in force for key stages 1-3 and will be implemented as planned for key stage 4 in the autumn of 1993.

The School Examinations and Assessment Council will accordingly be publishing shortly its criteria for GCSE and equivalent examination syllabuses, which will apply to courses beginning in the autumn term 1993 and 1994. These are based upon the existing order but have been designed to take account of the objectives of the review I have announced today.

I am placing in the Library of the House the advice I have received from the National Curriculum Council and my reply.

Higher Education Funding Council

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will announce the membership of the Higher Education Funding Council for England; and what initial guidance he intends to give to the council.

Mr. Patten: I have announced today that the membership of the Higher Education Funding Council for England will be as follows:

Sir Ron Dearing *(Chairman)*
Chairman, Universities Funding Council/Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council

Professor Colin Campell
Vice-Chancellor, University of Nottingham

Professor Graeme Davies *(Chief Executive)*
Chief Executive, Universities Funding Council/ Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council

Professor Brian K. Follett
Professor of Zoology, University of Bristol and Biological Secretary, The Royal Society

Mr. Robert Gunn
Chairman-designate of the Further Education Funding Council for England

Professor Kay-Tee Khaw
Professor of Clinical Gerontology, University of Cambridge

Sir Idris Pearce
Chairman of Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

Sir Robert Scholey
Chairman, British Steel

Professor Jack Shaw
Deputy Governor, Bank of Scotland and Chairman—designate of Scottish Higher Education Funding Council

Miss Janet Trotter
Director, Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education

Professor David J. Watson
Director, Brighton Polytechnic

Sir David Phillips
Chairman, Advisory Board for the Research Councils

Dr. Rab Telfer
Executive Chairman, BSI Standards

Secretary of State's representative

Mr. J. M. M. Vereker
Deputy Secretary, Department for Education

Alternate: Mr. C. A. Clark

I have today sent a letter of guidance to the chairman of the council, and am placing a copy in the Library.

HEALTH

NHS Spending

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) in each of the past five years, how much of the total spend on hospital and community health services has gone on *(a)* services to patients and *(b)* paying pensions and other payments to people no longer working for the national health service;

(2) in each of the past five years, how many people who no longer work for the national health service have been in receipt of payments from funds allocated to the provision of hospital and community health services.

Mr. Sackville: Retirement pensions are funded by contributory self-financing schemes which fall outside the hospital and community health services budget. The information requested on other payments to former NHS employees is not collected centrally.

NHS Security

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further steps she is taking to reduce the cost of crime on national health service budgets.

Mr. Sackville: Security arrangements at health service premises, are the responsibility of local managers.

The National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts has recently published (with financial assistance from the Department) the new edition of the "NHS Security Manual". The Department has provided copies for general managers and commended it to them as an excellent source of advice. A copy is also available in the Library.

Earlier this year the Department commissioned a study by management consultants of security issues at an NHS hospital. The report of the study is expected within the next few weeks.

Rural Access

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to improve access to health services in rural areas.

Mr. Sackville: It is the responsibility of each district health authority and family health services authority to meet the health needs of its resident population. If the hon. Member has a particular problem in mind, perhaps he will write to me.

Low Income Scheme

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the results of his Department's review of the health benefits low income scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Soon.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the total work force in his Department are registered as disabled; what steps she is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within her Department; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: At January 1992—the latest figures available—1·9 per cent. of the total workforce was registered disabled. In addition, a number of staff have a disability but are not registered. The Department is an equal opportunity employer and observes the code of practice for the employment of people with a disability issued by the Cabinet Office. At present the majority of recruitment is being undertaken by the NHS management executive which is to relocate from London to Leeds, where the new building has been designed specifically to allow easy access for people with disabilities. A recently published brochure outlining job opportunities within the management executive encourages applications from people with disabilities. In addition all job advertisements carry the recognised disability symbol which signifies that applications are welcomed from people with a disability who are suitably qualified.

Dental Services Payments

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the report of the discussion groups on the level of general dental services payments.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. The purpose of this report was to assist the joint inquiry of the health departments and the General Dental Services Committee in examining the reasons for the level of payments to dentists in 1991-92.

Low Income Scheme

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will amend the national health service low income scheme to provide that if a claim is made within three months of a charge being incurred for the cost of spectacles, a refund will be paid, on the same terms as for prescription charges, dental charges and eye tests; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: From 1 June 1992 the time limit for claiming a refund under the NHS low income scheme was extended to three months in respect of charges for prescriptions, dental treatment, wigs and fabric supports, spectacles prescribed by the hospital eye service, and fares to hospital for NHS treatment. The arrangements for other optical refunds are being considered as part of the review of administration of the NHS low income scheme.

Disability

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received in the past 12 months about the implementation of the remaining sections of the Disabled Persons (Representation, Consultation and Services) Act 1986; what plans she has to implement these sections; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: We have received 73 letters concerning our decision not to implement sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Disabled Persons Act, seven of which also referred to section 7. The Act was also the subject of five parliamentary questions during this period.

The requirements of these sections are now, to a very large extent, reflected in our new and wide-ranging reforms of community care. The need to implement these sections of the Disabled Persons Act will be reviewed in the light of several years' experience of the community care arrangements.

Women's Health, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps her Department is taking in Liverpool to improve women's health care, particularly in relation to the prevention and treatment of cervical cancer; and what steps she is taking to ensure that the new Liverpool women's hospital will have adequate access via public transport.

Mr. Sackville: The provision of health services in Liverpool is the responsibility of Liverpool health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. M. F. Emberton, the authority chairman, for details.

Cystic Fibrosis

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to exempt cystic fibrosis sufferers from prescription charges.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no plans to extend the range of conditions which currently attract free prescriptions on medical grounds. Extensive exemption and charge remission arrangements, coupled with the prescription prepayment certificate scheme, protect those who might otherwise have difficulty in paying prescription charges.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which health authorities are currently charging cystic fibrosis sufferers for nebulisers; and what is her Department's policy on making vital medical equipment available to the chronically ill.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorites cannot make charges for nebulisers, or other items of medical equipment supplied as part of NHS treatment, unless there is specific statutory provision for charges to be made.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cystic fibrosis sufferers there are in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* each family health services authority area and *(c)* each district health authority area.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the estimated annual cost of prescriptions is *(a)* to each cystic fibrosis sufferer and *(b)* to all cystic fibrosis sufferers across the United Kingdom.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available.

Surgeons (HIV Infection)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to the guidelines concerning HIV infection following the infection of a surgeon at the Liverpool royal teaching hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The United Kingdom health departments issued occupational guidance for health care workers in 1988. Revised guidelines "AIDS-HIV Infected Health Care Workers" containing recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group on AIDS were issued in December 1991. A copy is available in the Library. An advisory panel, chaired by Dame Mary Donaldson has been set up to provide advice in individual cases.

The guidance states that health care workers who know or suspect that they have been exposed to HIV infection must seek occupational advice and an HIV test if appropriate, and that those with HIV infection should not perform invasive surgical procedures.

The guidance also states that in certain circumstances health authorities and NHS trusts may consider it appropriate to notify patients who have undergone invasive procedures by a health care worker subsequently found to be infected with HIV.

In the recent case in Liverpool, the guidelines were followed. The surgeon concerned ceased work when HIV infection was suspected, and the health authority and hospital considered it appropriate to contact patients to offer reassurance, and HIV antibody tests if required. The guidelines are kept under review to reflect developing knowledge of HIV infection.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, columns *172-73*, why copies of the consultation document on the application by Greenwich health services for trust status were not available to members of the Greenwich community health council at its meeting on the evening of 14 May.

Dr. Mawhinney: In April Greenwich community health council was consulted by the regional health authority about arrangements for the public consultation exercises. Had it indicated that it required copies of the application for its meeting on 14 May, these would have been made available.

Hospital Information Systems

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the list and costs involved in providing the various hospital information systems.

Mr. Sackville: Hospital information systems are intended to support the operational needs of the units and local managers are responsible for deciding which systems to implement. Information about the cost of the various hospital information systems is not held centrally.

General Practitioners

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners in the area covered by the Redbridge and Waltham Forest family health services authority have become fundholders.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am informed by the chairman of the North East Thames regional health authority that there is one GP fundholder and one GP in the preparatory year for fundholding in the area covered by the Redbridge and Waltham Forest family health services authority.

Mentally Disordered Offenders

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the joint Department of Health and Home Office review of services for mentally disordered offenders.

Mr. Yeo: The review continues to make good progress and is on schedule to complete its work in July.

In his reply on 13 November 1991 at columns *583-84* to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South East (Mr. Paice), the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, announced that we were publishing four initial reports for consultation. We have received some 200 responses. They have overwhelmingly supported the direction of development proposed in the reports. They also contained many detailed comments, for which we are most grateful.

We are today publishing for consultation five further reports submitted by the steering committee chaired by Dr. John Reed. Copies are available in the Library. These cover finance, staffing and training, research, academic development and services for mentally disordered offenders with special needs. The reports are being issued, as before, to a wide range of interested bodies inviting their comments.

Further work in the review is being directed particularly to issues of race and culture, the needs of learning disabled and homeless people, and the role of, and support for, families. These will be reflected in the steering committee's final report.

The Government will be considering the recommendations arising from this review as a whole in the light of the final report and the responses to consultation on the present and earlier proposals. We have already announced increased capital funding for medium secure psychiatric provision of £18 million in the current year, against £3 million in 1991-92.

My right hon. and learned and hon. Friends and I remain committed to close co-operation between our Departments in this field. We are again most grateful to Dr. Reed and his colleagues for the work they have done.

Census Data

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to ensure that the release of detailed data for the 1991 census occurs as speedily as possible.

Mr. Sackville: In my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on 8 May at col *9*, I stated that release of the first computer-processed census results was under way, in the form of publication of the first county monitor. County monitors contain summary statistics for all local authority districts on all the census topics which were fully processed and will be published county by county, as the data processing is completed.

In a reply to the then Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) on 5 March at columns *272-73*, my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State described a major problem which had arisen in processing the answers to the question on the 1991 census form on the term-time address of students. He explained that this had caused some delay to the publication of census results, and gave an outline provisional timetable for publication of the first tranche of results.

Every effort is being made to publish all county monitors by the end of September 1992, and to produce and publish the rest of the first tranche of census outputs to the timetable given in issue 19 of the "Census Newsletter", a copy of which is available in the Library. Further details of the census output timetable will be published in future editions of the "Census Newsletter" as soon as they are sufficiently firm.

Priority is being given to providing those census figures, including statistics required for re-basing the Registrar General's annual mid-year estimates, needed for use in the calculations of 1993-94 resource allocations to local and health authorities.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what policy guidelines are currently in place within her Department and the purchasing organisations for which she has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Sackville: Government Departments, including their executive agencies, are required to pay their bills promptly. The timing of payments is stipulated in our standard terms and conditions which form part of all our contracts or purchase orders. These state that unless otherwise agreed in writing by the purchaser, the supplier shall render a separate invoice in respect of each consignment delivered under the order. Payment shall be due 30 days after receipt of the goods or the correct invoice therefore, whichever is the later.

To help encourage prompt payment of bills by Government contractors to their subcontractors, all new

Government contracts contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay its subcontractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment shall be to pay the subcontractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what distribution has taken place within her Department and the purchasing organisations for which she has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—a Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Mr. Sackville: "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. Guidelines on purchasing by Government Departments already exists and are enhanced by the Department's own internal purchasing and supply manual.

The Department of Employment has been undertaking a survey of prompt payment record of Government Departments during the financial year 1991-92 and the results of this exercise will be published in the near future by the Department of Trade and Industry, which now has responsibility for small firms' issues, including late payment. After studying these results the Department will consider what further measures, if any, may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by the public sector.

Earth Summit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contribution her Department has made to Her Majesty's Government's proposals to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil in June.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has contributed to aspects of the conference which have implications for health, in particular, the environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals was selected by the preparatory committee as one of the areas for which programmes of action should be agreed.

In December last year the Chief Medical Officer chaired a meeting of experts from over 70 countries to discuss proposals for an intergovernmental mechanism for chemical risk assessment and management. A report has been put forward for consideration by the conference.

Revenue Allocations

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are her proposals for monitoring the formula adjustments for revenue allocations to district health authorities made by regional health authorities in order to ensure consistency and stability in financial support.

Mr. Sackville: The NHS management executive is in regular contact with each of the regional health authorities (RHAs) about their formulae for making revenue allocations to district health authorities. The aim is to provide RHAs with advice and assistance in the development of their formulae and to ensure that the formulae meet common technical standards set out in FDL(91)102, issued in August 1991, a copy of which is available in the Library.

London Constituencies

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the total number of electors registered in each parliamentary constituency in Greater London *(a)* on the current electoral register and *(b)* on the registers in force for each of the years from 1978-79 to 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: The number of electors on registers between 1983 and 1992 are shown in the tables. There was a general reorganisation of parliamentary constituencies in 1983, and comparable figures for earlier years are not readily available.

Parliamentary electors registered in each constituency in Greater London, 1983-1987

Note: BC = borough constituency

Parliamentary constituency		*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Barking	BC	52,888	52,686	52,414	52,317	52,137
Battersea	BC	66,518	66,802	67,172	67,064	67,462
Beckenham	BC	59,384	59,910	60,075	60,736	60,718
Bethnal Green and Stepney	BC	55,649	54,721	54,520	54,982	55,984
Bexleyheath	BC	60,039	60,319	60,303	60,053	60,206
Bow and Poplar	BC	58,209	57,534	57,515	58,219	59,503
Brent East	BC	61,987	61,917	61,505	61,396	61,378
Brent North	BC	63,377	63,642	63,691	62,905	63,652
Brent South	BC	63,468	63,352	62,714	63,020	63,229
Brentford and Isleworth	BC	69,824	68,855	68,185	70,496	72,371
Carshalton and Wallington	BC	69,542	69,746	69,798	69,973	69,906
Chelsea	BC	54,080	52,496	52,127	49,080	49,745
Chingford	BC	56,903	57,125	57,260	57,430	57,417
Chipping Barnet	BC	59,071	59,220	59,693	60,377	61,419
Chislehurst	BC	55,261	55,479	55,679	55,976	56,142
City of London and Westminster South, The	BC	68,007	65,921	64,233	61,747	57,619
Croydon Central	BC	57,138	57,368	57,029	57,120	55,962
Croydon North East	BC	63,433	63,762	63,726	64,386	63,627
Croydon North West	BC	58,807	58,674	58,395	58,946	57,807
Croydon South	BC	65,279	65,777	66,150	66,440	65,754
Dagenham	BC	63,715	63,396	63,086	62,910	62,349
Dulwich	BC	57,070	57,041	56,612	56,618	56,764
Ealing, Acton	BC	62,639	63,173	64,179	66,072	67,615

Parliamentary constituency		*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Ealing North	BC	69,303	69,456	70,570	71,736	72,321
Ealing, Southall	BC	72,252	72,107	73,535	74,937	75,660
Edmonton	BC	65,558	65,832	66,198	66,451	66,719
Eltham	BC	55,817	55,633	55,035	54,702	54,702
Enfield North	BC	68,829	69,173	69,280	69,653	70,190
Enfield, Southgate	BC	66,174	66,643	66,893	67,062	67,257
Erith and Crayford	BC	56,837	57,790	58,648	59,452	60,015
Feltham and Heston	BC	79,385	78,450	77,217	80,108	81,999
Finchley	BC	56,176	56,085	56,292	57,118	58,143
Fulham	BC	52,224	51,529	51,265	52,786	54,843
Greenwich	BC	52,091	51,554	51,493	51,246	51,289
Hackney North and Stoke Newington	BC	67,039	68,220	67,310	65,807	67,023
Hackney South and Shoreditch	BC	71,649	73,041	71,950	70,226	71,167
Hammersmith	BC	46,507	47,250	46,739	48,264	48,621
Hampstead and Highgate	BC	66,981	66,484	64,151	62,779	63,592
Harrow East	BC	80,837	81,453	82,131	81,863	81,842
Harrow West	BC	74,017	74,172	74,310	74,585	74,771
Hayes and Harlington	BC	58,309	58,481	58,462	58,612	58,931
Hendon North	BC	55,173	54,542	54,466	54,714	55,534
Hendon South	BC	54,403	53,913	53,804	53,937	54,959
Holborn and St. Pancras	BC	71,964	70,735	69,285	69,777	70,901
Hornchurch	BC	62,559	62,730	62,781	62,935	63,129
Hornsey and Wood Green	BC	74,459	75,170	79,322	81,443	81,122
Ilford North	BC	60,802	60,856	60,569	60,824	60,970
Ilford South	BC	58,725	58,675	58,645	58,956	59,057
Islington North	BC	60,379	60,999	60,058	60,175	59,241
Islington South and Finsbury	BC	60,120	59,268	59,947	59,269	58,255
Kensington	BC	50,123	48,882	49,135	47,974	48,456
Kingston upon Thames	BC	57,460	57,632	55,930	55,615	55,411
Lewisham Deptford	BC	59,150	58,672	57,809	57,998	58,656
Lewisham East	BC	61,800	61,387	60,887	60,625	60,150
Lewisham West	BC	63,663	63,447	62,736	63,370	63,473
Leyton	BC	58,376	58,168	58,031	58,163	58,263
Mitcham and Morden	BC	64,255	63,775	63,090	63,585	63,696
Newham North East	BC	63,118	62,840	62,152	61,861	61,366
Newham North West	BC	50,295	49,670	48,771	49,180	48,029
Newham South	BC	50,862	50,528	51,323	51,138	50,711
Norwood	BC	56,038	54,334	54,229	56,423	56,876
Old Bexley and Sidcup	BC	50,942	51,011	50,995	51,073	51,433
Orpington	BC	59,588	60,042	60,274	60,422	60,373
Peckham	BC	59,621	59,915	59,929	59,623	59,636
Putney	BC	64,455	64,089	64,196	63,761	63,586
Ravensbourne	BC	59,611	60,127	59,854	59,941	60,060
Richmond and Barnes	BC	56,394	57,135	56,159	56,157	55,196
Romford	BC	56,412	56,556	56,393	56,221	56,351
Ruislip-Northwood	BC	57,027	57,466	56,951	56,632	56,957
Southwark and Bermondsey	BC	56,235	56,427	55,226	55,278	55,786
Streatham	BC	60,397	59,286	57,947	60,036	60,799
Surbiton	BC	47,425	47,682	46,384	46,443	45,842
Sutton and Cheam	BC	63,834	64,138	64,202	64,289	64,459
Tooting	BC	68,732	69,272	69,519	69,156	68,670
Tottenham	BC	68,601	69,144	74,744	76,272	76,713
Twickenham	BC	64,833	65,309	64,919	65,552	65,281
Upminster	BC	67,392	67,530	67,516	67,787	67,446
Uxbridge	BC	62,360	63,272	63,055	63,876	63,856
Vauxhall	BC	65,252	64,237	63,474	65,478	66,789
Walthamstow	BC	48,842	48,871	48,972	49,037	49,222
Wanstead and Woodford	BC	58,284	58,347	58,393	58,432	58,374
Westminster North	BC	69,281	69,970	67,594	65,506	59,538
Wimbledon	BC	64,772	64,397	63,827	63,626	63,880
Woolwich	BC	56,961	57,138	57,801	58,512	58,666
Total		5,143,248	5,139,853	5,128,834	5,146,722	5,155,019

Source: Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.
The figures in this table are those supplied by Electoral Registration Officers at the times when the registers come in to use each year.

Parliamentary electors registered in each constituency in Greater London, 1988-1992

Note: BC = borough constituency

Parliamentary constituency		1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Barking	BC	51,885	51,501	51,503	51,147	50,998
Battersea	BC	67,198	66,508	66,383	67,187	68,617
Beckenham	BC	60,558	60,336	60,261	59,764	60,009
Bethnal Green and Stepney	BC	55,326	55,859	54,895	52,475	56,165
Bexleyheath	BC	60,105	59,399	58,966	58,424	58,431
Bow and Poplar	BC	58,366	57,884	57,655	53,493	57,618
Brent East	BC	59,831	58,765	58,693	57,010	61,610
Brent North	BC	63,464	62,458	61,463	60,672	59,598
Brent South	BC	61,787	60,757	60,463	58,330	56,317
Brentford and Isleworth	BC	71,982	70,547	72,713	72,532	71,619
Carshalton and Wallington	BC	67,224	65,539	65,736	65,150	65,857
Chelsea	BC	46,763	44,381	45,618	42,651	42,549
Chingford	BC	57,093	56,219	56,181	56,393	55,981
Chipping Barnet	BC	60,880	59,543	58,269	57,986	57,721
Chislehurst	BC	56,033	55,609	55,139	54,675	54,323
City of London and Westminster South, The	BC	55,407	55,454	53,347	54,823	54,667
Croydon Central	BC	55,506	55,284	53,792	54,612	56,292
Croydon North East	BC	62,844	63,547	61,849	62,911	64,888
Croydon North West	BC	56,825	56,703	54,015	55,129	57,691
Croydon South	BC	65,491	65,287	63,963	64,125	65,539
Dagenham	BC	61,689	61,104	61,110	60,642	60,254
Dulwich	BC	56,354	55,086	54,849	56,719	55,420
Ealing, Acton	BC	65,367	64,236	64,375	58,926	59,152
Ealing North	BC	71,123	70,012	70,142	64,685	64,212
Ealing, Southall	BC	74,304	72,565	72,698	66,678	66,371
Edmonton	BC	65,593	65,856	65,490	63,918	63,535
Eltham	BC	54,167	53,542	53,176	53,136	52,633
Enfield North	BC	69,861	69,754	69,414	68,617	68,030
Enfield, Southgate	BC	66,533	66,436	66,093	65,183	64,882
Erith and Crayford	BC	60,367	60,340	60,642	59,974	59,936
Feltham and Heston	BC	81,808	80,714	82,955	83,169	82,085
Finchley	BC	58,667	55,957	53,779	53,566	53,322
Fulham	BC	53,963	52,107	51,976	52,419	52,960
Greenwich	BC	50,319	49,007	48,638	49,110	48,225
Hackney North and Stoke Newington	BC	66,831	67,475	67,257	64,975	54,980
Hackney South and Shoreditch	BC	71,003	70,573	70,229	67,630	58,225
Hammersmith	BC	47,888	47,198	46,957	47,022	47,468
Hampstead and Highgate	BC	62,578	61,118	60,057	58,624	58,436
Harrow East	BC	81,280	77,538	76,918	76,258	75,435
Harrow West	BC	74,175	71,902	71,582	70,811	70,340
Hayes and Harlington	BC	58,855	58,683	58,853	58,579	54,979
Hendon North	BC	55,068	54,059	52,220	52,027	52,066
Hendon South	BC	53,966	52,242	49,128	49,240	48,816
Holborn and St. Pancras	BC	70,154	68,937	67,034	65,082	64,721
Hornchurch	BC	62,772	62,228	62,045	61,509	61,284
Hornsey and Wood Green	BC	79,819	78,030	76,449	74,341	73,922
Ilford North	BC	62,097	61,303	60,377	60,067	59,261
Ilford South	BC	60,054	59,139	57,968	57,005	56,376
Islington North	BC	57,095	55,550	55,206	55,672	56,589
Islington South and Finsbury	BC	55,817	55,309	54,961	55,130	55,849
Kensington	BC	46,998	44,393	46,482	43,131	42,327
Kingston upon Thames	BC	54,954	53,948	51,648	51,126	51,659
Lewisham, Deptford	BC	58,474	57,618	57,113	56,780	57,266
Lewisham East	BC	59,689	59,588	58,655	57,979	57,959
Lewisham West	BC	65,209	62,262	61,415	60,454	59,596
Leyton	BC	57,751	56,954	57,682	58,227	57,755
Mitcham and Morden	BC	65,197	64,236	64,772	61,690	64,392
Newham North East	BC	61,315	60,183	59,453	59,282	60,057
Newham North West	BC	47,814	47,591	46,786	46,473	46,855
Newham South	BC	51,614	52,000	51,712	51,007	51,508
Norwood	BC	56,528	55,955	55,123	52,166	52,730
Old Bexley and Sidcup	BC	51,036	50,507	50,101	49,934	50,064
Orpington	BC	59,958	59,342	58,825	58,214	58,090
Peckham	BC	59,510	59,430	59,498	61,288	58,534

Parliamentary constituency		1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Putney	BC	62,999	62,017	61,761	61,883	62,405
Ravensbourne	BC	59,466	58,758	58,278	57,992	57,992
Richmond and Barnes	BC	53,563	51,746	52,034	52,080	53,592
Romford	BC	56,003	55,537	54,938	54,654	54,713
Ruislip-Northwood	BC	56,661	56,479	56,070	56,193	54,654
Southwark and Bermondsey	BC	56,024	56,949	57,858	60,182	60,511
Streatham	BC	59,676	58,960	58,421	56,844	57,046
Surbiton	BC	45,330	44,344	43,607	43,461	43,845
Sutton and Cheam	BC	61,963	60,631	61,058	61,017	61,339
Tooting	BC	67,634	66,777	66,599	67,331	68,766
Tottenham	BC	76,092	75,530	73,196	70,236	68,789
Twickenham	BC	64,571	62,618	63,551	62,881	63,702
Upminster	BC	66,905	66,066	65,383	64,990	64,927
Uxbridge	BC	64,122	64,309	64,721	64,698	62,306
Vauxhall	BC	65,809	65,060	63,920	61,739	62,684
Walthamstow	BC	49,072	48,744	49,319	49,836	49,603
Wanstead and Woodford	BC	59,045	58,521	56,932	57,131	56,454
Westminster North	BC	57,665	55,414	54,516	57,742	59,064
Wimbledon	BC	62,912	63,726	62,745	60,633	62,520
Woolwich	BC	58,269	57,322	57,214	57,158	56,534
Total		5,098,129	5,031,830	4,993,369	4,934,505	4,916,630

Source: Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.
The figures in this table are those supplied by Electoral Registration Officers at the times when the registers come in to use each year.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the estimated adult population in each parliamentary constituency in Greater London for each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: Population estimates are available for London boroughs but not for parliamentary constituencies. Mid-year estimates of persons aged 18 and over in each borough between 1979 and 1990 are shown in the table.

Estimated resident population of London boroughs aged 18 and over (thousands)

Area	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Greater London	5,236·9	5,240·4	5,242·6	5,228·1	5,235·3	5,248·3
City of London	5·1	5·0	4·8	4·8	4·9	4·8
Barking and Dagenham	114·6	115·0	115·1	115·3	114·7	114·5
Barnet	226·4	226·6	228·1	228·3	228·5	231·7
Bexley	160·3	161·7	162·8	164·3	165·6	167·0
Brent	192·0	191·9	193·3	194·0	194·9	196·0
Bromley	225·5	227·1	228·5	229·5	232·6	233·2
Camden	153·2	149·9	148·6	146·5	146·2	146·7
Croydon	240·9	241·1	242·1	243·2	243·0	242·8
Ealing	216·7	214·4	215·1	215·4	217·4	221·8
Enfield	196·9	198·1	199·1	200·4	201·8	202·9
Greenwich	158·8	160·7	161·0	162·0	162·4	163·0
Hackney	136·8	137·2	137·6	136·6	139·1	140·3
Hammersmith and Fulham	125·1	123·3	122·4	121·2	121·9	122·0
Haringey	163·7	163·1	159·2	157·7	158·3	154·8
Harrow	150·4	151·3	151·5	151·9	153·1	155·3
Havering	180·1	181·4	181·5	183·0	183·3	184·1
Hillingdon	173·6	175·1	177·1	177·5	179·3	178·5
Hounslow	152·5	154·4	155·3	156·1	153·4	151·2
Islington	128·8	130·1	130·6	128·7	128·8	130·8
Kensington and Chelsea	120·1	119·4	117·7	115·3	113·2	114·0
Kingston upon Thames	105·5	105·3	104·7	104·7	105·1	105·9
Lambeth	191·0	195·2	195·3	191·9	190·0	189·9
Lewisham	179·3	180·3	181·1	179·4	178·5	179·3
Merton	129·8	129·8	130·5	130·9	132·9	128·1
Newham	146·3	149·5	150·8	152·0	154·4	155·8
Redbridge	176·5	177·0	176·8	176·2	176·2	176·4
Richmond upon Thames	129·4	128·4	128·7	128·0	128·8	128·9
Southwark	166·9	167·9	168·4	165·9	167·1	167·3
Sutton	129·6	130·5	130·8	131·4	131·6	132·0
Tower Hamlets	109·3	109·4	110·2	109·5	108·8	109·0
Waltham Forest	164·4	164·7	164·4	163·1	162·8	163·4
Wandsworth	205·9	205·6	204·3	202·0	202·3	203·1
City of Westminster	161·7	160·5	159·1	157·5	156·2	153·5

Notes:
1. All figures are rounded to thousands.
2. Totals may not agree due to rounding.
3. Source: Population Estimates Unit, OPCS; Crown copyright.

Estimated resident population of London Boroughs aged 18 and over

Thousands

Area	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Greater London	5,362·6	5,367·6	5,364·8	5,233·4	5,246·4	5,268·3
City of London	4·4	4·2	4·0	3·7	3·6	3·1
Barking and Dagenham	114·1	113·8	113·7	113·4	113·5	113·7
Barnet	234·0	236·3	236·9	233·1	236·1	239·7
Bexley	168·1	170·0	170·9	171·2	171·2	171·5
Brent	196·0	196·5	197·3	197·5	195·5	196·1
Bromley	233·8	233·8	235·4	235·7	236·9	237·6
Camden	148·1	149·5	149·9	147·5	147·1	147·9
Croydon	243·9	244·7	245·3	244·2	244·8	246·5
Ealing	225·2	227·9	229·3	230·0	227·4	227·2
Enfield	204·7	205·4	202·6	202·2	203·4	205·2
Greenwich	163·5	164·8	164·0	162·4	161·7	163·5
Hackney	140·1	139·7	139·8	140·8	142·9	142·6
Hammersmith and Fulham	121·9	121·2	121·2	119·6	118·2	118·5
Haringey	152·6	151·5	149·5	148·2	146·1	147·9
Harrow	155·7	155·9	154·4	151·9	149·2	147·9
Havering	184·3	184·8	185·1	184·1	182·2	182·0
Hillingdon	179·1	179·0	178·7	179·3	181·9	182·1
Hounslow	149·2	148·4	147·7	145·0	149·0	150·0
Islington	132·7	132·3	132·6	132·7	132·6	135·6
Kensington and Chelsea	114·7	113·7	109·5	102·7	105·7	105·0
Kingston upon Thames	106·0	106·1	105·0	107·0	108·3	110·5
Lambeth	189·5	190·5	189·0	185·9	184·4	179·0
Lewisham	179·7	179·3	178·9	176·5	174·4	173·4
Merton	128·7	128·9	128·2	128·1	128·0	128·5
Newham	155·3	152·4	153·1	153·1	152·9	153·6
Redbridge	178·0	178·3	180·3	180·9	182·3	184·3
Richmond upon Thames	129·8	130·3	131·3	129·4	131·5	134·1
Southwark	167·5	167·3	167·5	167·2	168·9	172·7
Sutton	132·5	132·1	132·2	131·9	132·6	131·9
Tower Hamlets	110·6	114·7	119·3	121·3	122·6	124·6
Waltham Forest	165·0	165·0	164·5	163·7	162·7	164·0
Wandsworth	204·2	203·1	204·5	204·2	203·9	203·8
City of Westminster	150·0	146·2	143·2	139·4	141·2	144·7

Notes:
1. All figures are rounded to thousands
2. Totals may not agree due to rounding
3. Source: Population Estimates Unit, OPCS; Crown copyright

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give separate figures for the spending by her Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is her latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: Information for the years 1979-80 to 1987-88 is not available in the form requested.

The Department's budget for communications and publicity includes provision for nurse recruitment, blood donor recruitment and drug misuse campaigns.

Expenditure is as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	
Television	1·662
Radio	0·205
Newspaper	1·196
Other Material	7·736
1989-90	
Television	3·549
Radio	0·127
Newspaper	2·739
Other Material	10·828
1990-91	
Television	1·900
Radio	0·005
Newspaper	2·258
Other Material	16·845
1991-92	
Television	4·489
Radio	0·015
Newspaper	3·106
Other Material	16·863

The budget for communications and publicity for 1992-93 is £26·2 million.

South Manchester Hospitals

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department has on plans or proposals for reorganising south Manchester's hospitals; what is the earliest date on which she expects any reorganisation could proceed; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Responsibility for planning hospital services in South Manchester is a matter for the North Western regional health authority and South Manchester health authority.

It is the long term objective of South Manchester health authority to concentrate acute hospital services in South Manchester on a single site. This proposal is subject to detailed consultation and to consideration by the regional health authority.

Interim proposals to transfer maternity services from Withington hospital to Wythenshaw hospital are presently the subject of further discussions between North Western regional health authority and South Manchester health authority.

Asthma

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of children under five years, five to 10 years, and 10 years plus are asthma sufferers by health district for Greater London according to the latest available statistics; and what is the number for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not held centrally.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children were born in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years; and how many and what percentage of those children were born to parents who were married at the time of their birth.

Mr. Sackville: The numbers of live births in the United Kingdom in 1987 to 1991 were as follows:

	Total births	*Births within marriage*	*Percentage of births within marriage*
1987	775,617	596,085	77·1
1988	787,556	589,516	74·9
1989	777,276	570,586	73·4
1990	798,612	575,768	72·1
[1]1991	792,506	556,393	70·2

[1] Provisional. *Source* (OPCS).

Cot Deaths

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by socio-economic class the number of deaths in England and Wales registered as *(a)* cot death and *(b)* sudden infant death syndrome in 1990.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 20 May 1992]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Numbers of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) deaths and of Cot deaths by father's social class, England, Wales and Elsewhere[1], 1990

Father's social class	*1990 Number of SIDS*	*1990 Number of Cot Deaths*
I	48	51
II	159	172
IIIN	65	68
IIIM	349	377
IV	177	196
V	140	153
Other	96	102
Not stated	121	125
Total	1,155	1,244

[1] These data may include some cases of children normally resident overseas.

Home Care Workers

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has issued any advice to local authorities regarding the grading of female home care workers following the recent ruling of the industrial tribunal in East Sussex.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* No. The grading of staff is a matter for local authorities to determine in their capacity as employers.

Dentists

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if she will make a statement on the remuneration of NHS dentists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to the reply 12 May 1992 col. 85]:* At a meeting today with representatives of the General Dental Services Committee (GDSC) I put forward fair and reasonable proposals on dentists' remuneration.

For the present year 1992-93 the intention of the Doctors and Dentists Remuneration Review Body (DDRB) was that, on average, a dentist's net earnings should be £35,815. This represented an 8·5 per cent. increase in dentists' net remuneration. The Government accepted this recommendation for a greater increase than was awarded to either doctors or nurses.

The evidence suggests that, if left unchanged, the July 1991 fee scale would provide in 1992-93 very substantially more than the DDRB recommended.

Calculations presented to the GDSC today show that, to bring the increase in dentists' income back to the level recommended by the DDRB, a fee reduction of about 23 per cent. would be needed now. The longer action is delayed, the more this figure rises.

I have weighed all the available evidence carefully. This includes the views put to me by dentists and their representatives, the results of the joint inquiry which the Health Departments and the GDSC began in February, and the emerging data on payments in the last financial quarter of 1991-92 to dentists.

Even allowing for some significant margin for error the evidence suggests that actual income will be much higher than intended income unless action is taken now.

I therefore propose a 7 per cent. lowering of the fee scale with effect from 8 July.

I also propose to reduce to £200 the ceiling at which courses of treatment require prior approval from the Dental Practice Board. It is reasonable in the present circumstances for dentists to have to seek prior approval from the Dental Practice Board of their plans for more expensive treatments. This will apply to some 3 per cent. of courses of treatment carried out.

These proposals represent the best way forward for patients, for dentists and taxpayers. They underline our full commitment to the NHS dental service. The chief executive of the NHS is writing to all regional general

managers and family health services authority managers today to stress to them the need to maintain the availability of NHS general dental services, if necessary, by employing salaried dentists.

For the future, the Government remain committed to a fundamental review of dental remuneration. I look to that review to develop a system which more effectively and fairly remunerates all dentists for the important work they do.

Smoking

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *84*, (1) when she expects to have information or indications on the proportions of smokers in the United Kingdom and in each other European Community country later then the 1989 figures in the *British Medical Journal;*

(2) what information she receives from the European Commission on the trends in smoking in each or any parts of the European Community.

Dr. Mawhinney *[pursuant to his reply 21 May 1992 col. 228]:* the figure given for smoking prevalance in the United Kingdom for 1990 should have been 30 per cent. rather than 39 per cent.

EMPLOYMENT

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total sum paid out in fees by her Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is her estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Expenditure on management consultancy in the Employment Department group in each year from 1984-85 to 1990-91 was as follows:

	£ thousands
1984-85	365
1985-86	365
1986-87	1,032
1987-88	653
1988-89	998
1989-90	1,482
1990-91	1,782
1991-92	[1]5,344

[1] Estimated outturn.

The information for 1992-93 will be reported to Parliament in the usual way. Information for 1979-80 to 1983-84 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons are registered as available for work in the SW9 postal code area of London; and how many are currently registered as unemployed.

Mr. McLoughlin: In April 1992, on the unadjusted basis, the number of claimants unemployed in the SW9 postal code area was 1,027.

This monthly unemployment count relates to claimants of benefits at unemployment benefit offices on the day of the count. Claimants include those people who claim unemployment benefit, income support or national insurance credits and who state that they are available for, and actively seeking, work.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the public opinion surveys carried out by her Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department's various research branches do not commission public opinion surveys as such. However, they do carry out research projects on a variety of employment-related issues which involve surveys of individuals. The following list shows those research studies, commissioned or partly funded by the Employment Department group (ED, Employment Service, Health and Safety Executive and the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service), which have involved surveys of individuals commissioned since 1 November 1991.

Barriers to Returning to Work
NUBS 2 Client Survey
Restart Courses Follow Up Survey
New Clients Follow-up Survey
North West Off Flows Study
Evaluation of Job Interview Guarantee Scheme
Ethnic Origin Equal Opportunities Survey
Attitudes Towards Part-Time and Flexible Working Hours
British Household Panel Study
Investors in People
Second Chance
Disability Symbol and Disability Advertising
Employers Attitudes to Jobcentres and the Employment of People with Disabilities
Jobclub Monitor
Just the Job Booklet Research
Insight Readership Survey

Youth Training

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people aged 16 and 17 years have applied for youth training; and how many have not been given a youth training place at once in each training and enterprise council area.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what income a 16 or 17-year-old receives on youth training, in any week, waiting for a youth training place; how many people aged 16 or 17 years waiting for a youth training place have been receiving income or income support; and how soon after applying for youth training a 16 or 17-year-old can receive income while waiting for a place to become available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The following arrangements apply:

(i) A young person on youth training (YT) in employed status will receive a wage at a level agreed with the employer.

(ii) A non-employed trainee must receive at least £29·50 per week if under 17 years old and £35 per week if 17 or over.

(iii) A young person waiting for YT may either have a place booked and be waiting to take it up, or may be seeking the offer of a place. In either case that young person, if under 18 years of age, may be eligible for a YT bridging allowance of £15 per week from the

Employment Service for up to eight weeks in any 12 month period or, if they run the risk of severe hardship, they may be eligible to receive income support through the severe hardship provision.

(iv) Even if they are not eligible for any of the payments in (iii) above, young people waiting for YT may still receive income from a variety of sources. The number of young people waiting for YT who have an income of their own cannot therefore be estimated accurately.

(v) Young people eligible for bridging allowance (except for some special groups) cannot start receiving bridging allowance until they have left a previous job or YT place, made an application, and waited for their first girocheque payment.

(vi) Young persons can secure income support (including severe hardship payments) as soon as they satisfy the eligibility criteria. They may be able to secure assistance through a crisis loan until regular payments commence.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the total work force in her Department are registered as disabled; what steps she is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within her Department; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of 3·2 per cent. at June 1991, the latest date for which figures are available. The Department also employs many other people with disabilities who have chosen not to register. It has also implemented the code of practice on the employment of people with disabilities in the civil service.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give separate figures for the spending by her Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is her latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Expenditure on advertising and promotional material by the Department of Employment from 1979-80 to 1985-86 was as follows:

	£
1979-80	70,000
1980-81	320,000
1981-82	400,000
1982-83	360,000
1983-84	500,000
1984-85	320,000
1985-86	1,220,000

Figures for television, radio and newspaper advertising and other promotional material are not available separately. The figures for 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 are as follows:

Year	*Television* £ million	*Press/Radio* £ million	*Other promotional* £ million
1986-87	9·3	3·0	4·1
1987-88	3·3	0·8	2·8
1988-89	2·1	2·3	1·3
1989-90	0·9	0·9	1·2
1990-91	N/A	0·5	2·1
1991-92	8·5	4·1	5·7

The figures from 1979-80 to 1990-91 refer only to Department of Employment expenditure. They do not cover expenditure by the former Training Agency, Training Commission and Manpower Services Commission. Figures for these were provided to the hon. Member in a written reply on 5 November 1991 at col. 68-70. From 1991-92, expenditure by the former agency has been handled centrally within the Department's overall advertising and publicity budget.

The Department's overall advertising and publicity budget for 1992-93 is £8·35 million. Detailed decisions on expenditure by media category have not yet been taken.

High Peak TEC

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of young people offered training places by High Peak training and enterprise council within the last two years *(a)* finished their training and *(b)* found full-time jobs.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information required is not available in the form requested. Stockport and High Peak TEC became operational on 20 August 1990 previously the area came partly under Manchester East area office and Derbyshire area office. The latest information is for leavers from the youth training programme in the Stockport and High Peak TEC area during the period August 1990 to July 1991.

Thirty four per cent. of all leavers completed their training and 52 per cent. of all leavers went into full-time work.

Horizon Programme

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list all the United Kingdom participants in the European Community Horizon programme and the nature of each project; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of 37 projects have been formally approved under the Horizon programme in Great Britain. Information relating to these projects has been extracted from individual applications and is given in the following table. This was correct at 22 May 1992.

A further 45 projects have been given approval in principle. These will receive formal approval once outstanding queries on financial and transnational aspects are resolved.

Brothers of Charity Lancashire
To implement new techniques that identify economic sectors that are apt for vocational training and employment for people with a mental handicap.

Bilston Community College
To provide training and support to a group of Special Needs Trainers from Greece who wish to develop training provision in Greece.

Lancashire County Council
To develop a model programme of training for the physically disabled to enter the tourism industry.

Lancashire County Council
To develop model programmes of training and supported employment for those with physical and mental disabilities which will promote their inclusion into society.

Brothers of Charity
To provide training for open employment in horticulture/agriculture business for people with a mental handicap.

University of Nottingham
To establish a model for the computer mediated training of disabled people in Information Technology skills for employment in business and commerce.

Manchester Council for Voluntary Services
To support the creation of small business (Social Firms) providing an integrated work setting for people with mental distress.

Essex CDA
To facilitate the progression from sheltered workshop to open employment for long term unemployed mentally disabled people aged 25 and over.

Richmond Fellowship London
To offer an employment service to people with long term mental health problems and locate and develop appropriate training and employment opportunities.

Department of Adult Continuing Education University College Swansea
To enable physically handicapped people to gain the necessary qualifications and skills to work in open employment. These skills are primarily in Information Technology.

Kent Social Services
To enable people with severe learning and/or physical disabilities to gain access to the world of work by providing opportunities for vocational training, work experience, voluntary work and paid employment in ordinary workplaces.

Wheels For Change Clwyd
The creation of employment and training opportunities for people who have multiple disabilities in the context of open integrated employment in two existing bicycle co-operatives.

Scottish Interactive Technology Centre Midlothian
To develop a multi-media based (interactive video) training package to enable deaf people to acquire skills using computers, word processing, spreadsheet and databases.

WMCE Ltd. Berkshire
To develop a training programme targeted at very long term unemployed persons with no relevant or obsolete skills.

Centre for Deaf Studies University of Bristol
The provision of modularised training programmes for sign language interpreters within a university framework.

Bradford and Ilkley Community College
To develop models for training for disabled people; including those whose hearing is impaired; that will help them obtain employment in community education settings, including distance learning via satellite broadcasting and computer aided learning.

Hertfordshire College of Art and Design
To devise training modules in specialised techniques using the arts within rehabilitation and training settings, particularly related to the transfer from institutional and community care.

The Cellar Project West Yorkshire
A programme to give unemployed people disabled by long term psychiatric illness but capable of open employment the necessary vocational and social skills and work experience to make the transition from sheltered to open employment.

Newcastle Upon Tyne City Council
To develop a flexible learning programme for people with learning difficulties to equip them with a range of skills suited to their individual capabilities.

Park Lane College West Yorkshire
To provide vocational training leading to recognised qualifications and/or stable employment for long term unemployed people with both physical and sensory disabilities.

Brothers of Charity Lancashire
To identify economic sectors apt for vocational training and employment for people with mental handicap. Employment placement and supported employment to lead to open employment for some individuals.

Edinburgh University Settlement
To set up specialist training courses in Adult Basic Education and Art Therapy and make the transition from sheltered environments to mainstream education, training for vocational qualifications and open employment.

Swansea College
To develop a course for mentally handicapped people which will enable them to find suitable employment within the local tourist industry.

Hammersmith & Fulham Association for Mental Health (MIND)
To enable people who have experienced unemployment and who have a history of disabling mental health difficulties (psychiatric service users) to acquire and use practical work skills which will allow them to work flexibly as general handypersons.

Nritea/Mari Tyne & Wear
To increase the skill levels of house-bound disabled people in modern technologies and offer NVQ's in order for them to compete effectively in the labour market.

Social Firms Initiative Berkshire
To demonstrate that people with mental health problems can function efficiently and on a commercial basis when they are supported within the context of a Social Firm.

Sulis Trust Avon
To assist people who have experienced mental illness or emotional distress to make the best use of their work skills and abilities and secure employment with on-going support.

London Borough of Waltham Forest
To integrate people with learning difficulties into open employment and demonstrate their potential if they are given the necessary support.

Outset West Midlands
To deliver a training programme which facilities social and labour market integration for people with a mental illness who are returning to care in the community.

National Society for Epilepsy Buckinghamshire
To provide young people with epilepsy with a specialised training service geared to their specific needs and problems, and thereby enhance their chances of securing employment.

Epilepsy Association of Scotland
To improve the knowledge and skills of training personnel involved in the training of people with severe epilepsy to enable them to facilitate the transition of young people with epilepsy from the training situation to open employment.

Westminster Association for Mental Health
To develop a programme of training and supervised work experience in computing and information technology leading to a recognised vocational qualification and employment opportunities for long term unemployed people aged 25+ with disabilities resulting from mental illness.

Scottish Association for Mental Health
To provide improved access to the open labour market for people disabled by mental illness by developing small and medium sized enterprises and co-operatives and by making other business opportunities available to them.

Work-start Scotland
Implementing new approaches to social and economic integration of long term unemployed people, and increase their job entry rate by increasing the quality of training.

Migrants Resource Centre London
To prepare migrants and refugees through training and vocational guidance to enter into mainstream employment.

LAWTEC Lancashire
To identify homeless people through a network of agencies and assess their needs, skills and aptitudes, and to arrange accommodation linked to appropriate training, employment and/or further education with ongoing counselling.

Bristol One-Parent Project
To upgrade and develop the qualifications of lone

parents by setting up pre-training courses in a supportive network, and assist re-entry into open employment by offering educational and career guidance, developing an information bank on childcare facilities and counselling and financial advice.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of receipts in the United Kingdom during the current year from the Horizon programme; what proportion this represents of total European Community expenditure on the programme; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Horizon programme in Great Britain has received an allocation of 14·9 mecu—£10·38 million—for the calendar years 1991-93. This represents 10·8 per cent. of the 162 mecu allocated to member states to date under Horizon by the European Commission.

Training

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will state, on the same basis as "Training Statistics 1991" HMSO publication S410.4, *(a)* the total expenditure on training, *(b)* Government expenditure on training and *(c)* employers' expenditure on training, for each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: Comparable figures for years other than 1986-87, as published in "Training Statistics 1991", are not available.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of those completing employment training and youth training schemes in Walthamstow in 1990 and 1991 went on to full-time employment; and what proportion of the trainees on the schemes this represented.

Mr. McLoughlin: Walthamstow is now covered by London East TEC which became operational on 1 April 1991, previously Walthamstow was covered by East London area office. Information is available only for the larger areas as shown in the following table.

Success rates for Employment Training and Youth Training leavers from East London
Areas covered are London East TEC and residual TEED area office from April 1991 to July 1991 and East London area office from April 1990 to March 1991

	Completed training	*Completers into work*	*All leavers into work*	*Completers into work as proportion of all leavers*
	per cent.	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*
Employment Training				
April 1990 to March 1991	48	20	18	10
April 1991 to July 1991	54	12	13	5
Youth Training				
April 1990 to March 1991	27	66	44	20
April 1991 to July 1991	28	n/a	39	22

Notes: n/a = numbers too small to give accurate proportions.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the size of the budget, and the number of training places funded in 1991-92 and projected for 1992-93 for each training and enterprise council.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my predecessor gave to the then hon. Member for Langbaurgh on 3 February 1992 at columns *32-33*.

The budget allocations for training and enterprise councils (TECs) for 1992-93 are still subject to negotiation in some of the Department's training, enterprise and education directorate regions and therefore not yet available. Information regarding the number of training places funded is not available as TECs have contracted with local training providers on a training week basis.

Information regarding the number of training weeks contracted is commercial in confidence and a matter for the TEC to answer.

"Investor in People" Scheme

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list by name and location the organisations which *(a)* have been awarded the "Investor in People" recognition and *(b)* are in the process of working towards the standard required for the award.

Mr. McLoughlin: The latest available information on organisations in Great Britain which have been publicly recognised as "Investors in People" is as follows:

England and Wales

Name	*Training and Enterprise Council Location*
Nomix-Chipman Ltd.	Avon
Brindon Ropes Ltd.	Barnsley/Doncaster
Frizzell Financial Services Ltd.	Dorset
Unilever Research Colworth Laboratory	Bedfordshire
IDV UK Ltd.	Essex
Woods of Colchester Ltd.	Essex
Monsanto plc, Newport	Gwent
Tulsa Holdings	Gwent
Alternative Travel Group	Heart of England
Sheerness Steel Company plc	Kent
Elida Gibbs Ltd.	Leeds
Yorkshire Bank plc	Leeds
Pirelli Cables Ltd., Aberdare	Mid Glamorgan

Name	Training and Enterprise Council Location
Qualtech Services Ltd.	Mid Glamorgan
Hoseasons Holidays Ltd.	Norfolk and Waveney
Willmott Dixon Eastern Ltd.	Norfolk and Waveney
Lonrho Textiles Ltd.	Northumberland
Searle Pharmaceuticals	Northumberland
Prospect Foods Ltd.	North Yorkshire
Perrys of Rotherham	Rotherham
Venture Pressings Ltd.	Shropshire
Appor Ltd.	Southern Derbyshire
Steetley Brick and Concrete (Central Region)	Staffordshire
A Plus Group Ltd.	Thames Valley Enterprise
Komatsu UK Ltd.	Tyneside
Nissan Motor Manufacturing UK Ltd.	Wearside
Edward Howell Galvanisers Ltd.	Wolverhampton
Slade Packaging Ltd.	Norfold and Waveney
Tack Training International	Central London
Birds Eye Walls (Humberside)	Humberside
Headlines	Merseyside
TRW REPA Ltd.	County Durham
Birds Eye Walls (Gloucester)	Gloucestershire
Prudence Gowns	Devon and Cornwall
Plymouth Garden Centre	Devon and Cornwall
Vander Ltd.	Devon and Cornwall
South West Galvanisers Ltd.	Devon and Cornwall
Allied Group Ltd.	Teesside
Lucas Aerospace (Actuation Division)	Wolverhampton
Birds Eye Walls (Anglia)	Norfolk and Waveney
Bishop Fleming	Devon and Cornwall
Claro Precision Engineering Ltd.	North Yorkshire
V. G. Elemental Ltd.	South and East Cheshire
Davy McKee (Poole) Ltd.	Dorset
TRW United-Carr Ltd.	Thames Valley Enterprise
Bendix Safety Restraint Division Ltd.	Cumbria
The Belmont Group	Metrotec (Wigan)
Fastech Testing Ltd.	Metrotec (Wigan)

Scotland

Name	Local Enterprise Company Location
Amerada Hess Ltd. (Aberdeen Operations Division)	Grampian Enterprise
The Royal Bank of Scotland (Branch Banking Division)	Lothian and Edinburgh

Information about the names and locations of organisations which are in the process of working towards the standard required for recognition is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The latest available numerical information from the training and enterprise councils in England and Wales and local enterprise companies in Scotland is that at 31 March 1992, 1,010 organisations were formally committed to work towards recognition.

Employment Prospects (Isle of Wight)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will consider the Isle of Wight for a pilot study into employment prospects for women, in the light of the increase revealed in the 1991 census returns.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are no plans for a special study covering the Isle of Wight. The increases between 1981 and 1991 in the percentages of women on the Isle of Wight working as full-time employees, part-time employees and as self-employed, and the small decline in the percentage who are unemployed, show that, as in the United Kingdom as a whole, employment opportunities for women have increased.

City Working Hours

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether firms in the City of London, such as stockbrokers and merchant bankers, whose staff work more than a 48-hour basic week would need to seek derogation under the terms of the draft directive on working hours as it currently stands.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In its current form the draft directive on working time would apply to all employees except for those in transport and sea fishing. Derogations would be permitted in certain circumstances, including cases where the duration of working time can be determined by the employees themselves, such as managing executives or other people with autonomous decision taking powers. These maybe of relevance to the financial services sector. Notwithstanding possible derogations, the Government see no justification for general and compulsory limits on the working week and are continuing, through constructive discussions with our Community partners, to seek to protect employers and employees in the United Kingdom against arbitrary and unnecessary restrictions.

Age Discrimination

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will introduce legislation to ban discrimination against employees on grounds of age or the setting of arbitrary age limits.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. We do not believe that legislation is the way to tackle this issue.

Older Workers

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she expects to complete the setting up of the special advisory group on older workers; what are its terms of reference; and when it will start and complete its work.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have received an encouraging number of expressions of interest about the advisory group on older workers, and will soon be in a position to issue invitations for membership. The group will assist in encouraging, identifying and disseminating good employer practice with regard to older workers. It will start work later this year, and progress will be reviewed after three years.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits (Late Payment)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to publish the rules governing the schemes for compensating individuals for late payment of benefits.

Mr. Burt: The arrangements for making special payments to compensate individuals for late payment of benefit are made in accordance with the general principles concerning ex-gratia payments in "Government Accounting", The Treasury's published guide to accounting and financial procedures in Government. Each case is decided within these general principles, taking into account the particular facts and circumstances, which vary widely from case to case.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many individuals received compensation payments; and how much was paid, for each benefit in each year since the scheme for compensating individuals for late payment began.

Mr. Burt: Payments made to customers to compensate them for late payment of benefit in individual cases are as follows:

Benefit	*Number of individual payments*	*Total amount paid*[1] £
1984-85		
Maternity allowance	1	9
National insurance contributions (refund/waiver)	5	552
Retirement pension[2]	45	9,474
Widow's benefits	11	11,062
Invalidity/sickness benefit	37	6,046
Attendance allowance/invalid care allowance	5	999
Disablement benefit/constant attendance allowance	1	78
Unemployment benefit	25	1,350
Industrial death benefit	1	23
Severe hardship allowance	3	1,130
Mobility allowance	1	90
NCIP	2	316
War pensions	34	59,869
Supplementary benefits	[3]—	[3]—

[1]Figures rounded to the nearest £.
[2]Includes Christmas bonus.
[3]Figures unavailable.

Benefit	*Number of individual payments*	*Total amount paid*[1] £
1985-86		
Retirement pension[2]	359	264,150
Widow's benefits	16	9,863
Invalidity/sickness benefit	31	12,535
Attendance allowance/invalid care allowance	6	1,016
Disablement benefit/constant attendance allowance	4	4,684
Industrial death benefit	1	22
Child special allowance	1	163
Severe hardship allowance	1	154
Unemployment benefit	13	562
War pensions	60	89,940
Supplementary benefits	48	1,938

[1]Figures rounded to the nearest £.
[2]Includes Christmas bonus.

Benefit	*Number of individual payments*	*Total amount paid*[1] £
1986-87		
Maternity allowance	3	59
National insurance contributions (waiver/refund)	3	104
Retirement pension[2]	460	403,037
Widow's benefits	20	20,517
Invalidity/sickness benefit	87	28,850
Attendance allowance/invalid care allowance	10	4,661
Mobility allowance	2	959
Severe disablement allowance/NCIP	2	1,100
Disablement benefit/constant attendance allowance	5	2,089
Guardian's allowance	1	48
War pensions	59	64,100
Industrial death benefit	2	149
Supplementary benefits	[3]—	[3]—
Child benefit/one parent benefit/Family income supplement	[3]—	[3]—

[1]Figures rounded to the nearest £.
[2]Includes Christmas bonus.
[3]Figures unavailable.

Benefit	*Number of individual payments*	*Total amount paid*[1] £
1987-88		
Maternity allowance	1	20
National insurance contributions (waiver/refund)	9	2,985
Retirement pension[2]	469	473,941
Widow's benefits	23	39,006
Invalidity/sickness benefit	66	23,220

Benefit	Number of individual payments	Total amount paid[1] £
Attendance allowance/invalid care allowance	7	2,184
Mobility allowance	41	32,232
Disablement benefit/constant attendance allowance	15	5,149
Unemployment benefit	1	118
War pensions	20	56,411
Severe disablement allowance/NCIP	3	1,331
Supplementary benefit	254	51,237
Child benefit/one parent benefit/Family credit	2	317

[1]Figures rounded to the nearest £.
[2]Includes Christmas bonus.

Benefit	Number of individual payments	Total amount paid[1] £
1988-89		
Maternity allowance	2	99
National insurance contributions (waiver/refund)	2	534
Retirement pension[2]	167	127,997
Widow's benefits	16	8,476
Invalidity/sickness benefit	67	18,932
Attendance allowance/invalid care allowance	10	3,502
Mobility allowance	7	6,203
Severe disablement allowance/NCIP	7	3,016
Disablement benefit/constant attendance allowance	10	8,285
Guardians allowance	37	495
Income support	204	47,610

[1]Figures rounded to the nearest £.
[2]Includes Christmas bonus.

Benefit	Number of individual payments	Total amount paid[1] £
1989-90		
Maternity allowance	1	34
National insurance contributions (waiver refund)	9	987
Retirement pension[2]	127	50,750
Widow's benefits	9	28,115
Invalidity/sickness benefit	86	44,048
Attendance allowance/invalid care allowance	6	6,983
Mobility allowance	7	4,454
Severe disablement allowance/NCIP	4	2,631
Income support	153	32,458

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest £.
[2] Includes Christmas Bonus.

Benefit	Number of individual payments	Total amount paid[1] £
1990-91		
Maternity allowance	8	789
National insurance contributions (waiver/refund)	10	931
Retirement pension[2]	103	76,271
Widow's benefits	11	9,875
Invalidity/sickness benefit	39	15,686
Attendance allowance/invalid care allowance	6	3,417
Mobility allowance	2	3,481
Severe disablement allowance/NCIP	2	750
Income support	122	199,657

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest £.
[2] Includes Christmas bonus.
1991-92
Figures are not yet available.

Family Credit

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assumptions he made about (i) the case load take-up rate and (ii) the expenditure take-up rate of family credit when calculating the extra cost of £49 million of the change in qualifying hours threshold for income support/family credit.

Mr. Burt: No explicit assumption on take-up rates were required, or employed, in calculating the cost of the hours rule change.

The effects of changes in entitlement are calculated by adjusting modelled entitlement to reflect the ratio of receipt to modelled entitlement under existing policies. This allows for a number of factors that affect policy cost estimates, including incomplete take-up of benefit. These calculations are then further adjusted by adding estimates of behavioural changes likely to be induced by the policy change.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of people in Greater London entitled to claim family credit actually receive the benefit.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available. Estimates of the total number of families eligible for family credit can be obtained only for Great Britain as a whole, and only retrospectively, from Family Expenditure Survey data.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many weeks elapsed between application and receipt of family credit for *(a)* employed people and *(b)* self-employed people in each of the years for which family credit has been available; and what is the current figure;

(2) if he will list the total number of appeals lodged by *(a)* employed and *(b)* self-employed people against decisions not to grant family credit to applicants in each year since its inception; and if he will show the number of successful appeals in each year.

Mr. Burt: The administration of family credit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Social Fund

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the gross and net social fund budget in each year since 1988-89 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms in 1992-93 prices, broken down into (i) budgeting loans, (ii) crisis loans and (iii) community care grants.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table. Gross expenditure has risen in real terms since 1988-89. Direct comparisons between net expenditure in 1988-89 and subsequent years would ignore the additional expenditure made possible by the recycling of money received from loan repayments.

Social fund expenditure since 1988-89

£ million

	1988-89 Outturn	*1989-90 Outturn*	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Provisional Outturn*
Crisis loans (gross)	17	22	28	37
Budgeting loans (gross)	108	119	128	160
Crisis loans (net)	9	8	9	11
Budgeting loans (net)	68	25	22	38
Community care grants	41	60	67	79
Regulated payments (gross)	35	39	58	62
Regulated payments (net)	34	38	57	61
Total gross expenditure	201	240	281	338
Total gross expenditure 1992-93 prices[1]	259	290	313	353

[1]Real terms figures have been calculated using the current GDP deflator and may alter.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table.

Survey and Purpose

1. *Pilot work for the local customer survey*

To test the new questionnaires for the local customer survey 1992. This is a survey of the views of benefit offices' customers about the services provided. Conducted in February 1992.

2. *Disability benefits campaign evaluation*

Two waves of campaign evaluation conducted in January and April 1992.

3. *Child Support Agency*

Target market study among the Asian sector of the population. Currently being conducted.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Miss Widdecombe: Functions commonly associated with public relations are carried out by information officers as part of their duties in the Department's information division.

For information for 1979-80 to 1989-90, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 22 May 1991 at col. *535*.

Estimated total expenditure in 1991-92 is as follows:

Publicity, which includes television advertising and leaflets: £11·407 million.

Staff and running costs: total expenditure figures are not yet available.

1992-93 budgets for the headquarters information division and the Benefits Agency information service branch in the Department of Social Security are as follows:

	DSS HQ £ million	*BA £ million*
Publicity	10·088	8·261
Staff running costs	·813	1·25
	·345	

Social Security Offices

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the number and organisation of social security offices.

Mr. Burt: The number and organisation of social security offices is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department does not keep separate records of expenditure on management consultancy. Taking consultancy as a whole, the figures are in the table.

	£ million
1983-84	3·624
1984-85	7·726
1985-86	13·647
1986-87	17·220
1987-88	27·564
1988-89	47·730
1989-90	40·907
1990-91	78·094
1991-92	76·987
1992-93	[1]67·047

[1] Estimated.

Notes:

1. By far the majority of expenditure relates to information technology consultancy services in respect of the operational strategy.
2. The figures prior to 1989-90 relate to the combined Department of Health and Social Security.
3. Information prior to 1983-84 is not available.

Disabled employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the total work force in his Department are registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: As at 1 June 1991, 1·87 per cent. of the staff employed by the Department of Social Security, including its agencies, were registered as disabled. This figure excludes staff with disabilities who choose not to register and more than 50 registered disabled people employed under the sheltered placement scheme. The Department, including its agencies, is committed to implementing the civil service code of practice on the employment of people with disabilities and increasing the number of employees with disabilities.

Income support

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many recipients of income support aged between 18 to 24 years are living away from home and are entitled to the personal allowance for *(a)* persons aged 18 to 24 years, and *(b)* persons aged 25 years and over;

(2) what would be the cost of raising the income support personal allowance for persons aged 18 to 24 years who are living away from home to the level of the personal allowance for persons aged 25 and over;

(3) how many recipients of income support aged 18 to 24 years are entitled to the personal allowance rate which is generally appropriate to persons aged 25 years and over.

Mr. Burt: The latest available figures show that in May 1990 there were 218,000 single people aged 18 to 24 receiving income support at the rate appropriate to those aged 25 or over. This information is derived from the Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiry, May 1990, a copy of which is available in the Library.

There is no comparable statistic on the number of 18 to 24-year-old income support claimants who might be "living away from home", which has no standard definition. However, modelling based on data from the 1987-88-89 Family Expenditure Survey offers an estimate that in 1992-93 there are *(a)* 180,000 receiving the 18 to 24 personal allowance, and *(b)* 220,000 receiving the personal allowance for those aged 25 or over. This assumes that "living away from home" means people classified by the Family Expenditure Survey as the head of the household, plus all those living in the household of a person who is a non-relative.

From this an estimated total cost of raising the income support rate for those aged 18 to 24 who are living away from home to the same level as those aged 25 or over is around £110 million in a full year, including housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding difficulties experienced by claimants for disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: We have received some correspondence about the length and complexity of the claim pack and about the length of time taken to process claims. Some teething problems are not unexpected with such a major change to the administration of disability benefits and we are closely monitoring the operation of the new system. Nevertheless, the introduction of the new claims process for disability living allowance has been widely welcomed by both disabled people and their organisations as better meeting the needs of disabled people and putting greater reliance on what they have to say about their disability.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the trend in the speed of service at the attendance allowance unit since the introduction of disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Hardship Payments

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidelines exist for deciding entitlement to severe hardship payments for 16 and 17-year-olds; and if he will publish those guidelines.

Mr. Burt: The administration of social security benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Sickness and Invalidity Benefits

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applicants for *(a)* sickness benefit and *(b)* invalidity benefit were refused in each of the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, by reason of insufficient national insurance contributions; and how many of these refusals related to a period of study which was not credited with national insurance contributions under regulations 7 and 8 of the Social Security (Credits) Regulations.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is as follows:

Invalidity benefit cannot be paid unless the contribution conditions for sickness benefit have been satisfied or deemed to have been satisfied, and there has been 28 weeks of incapacity for work.

In 1989-90, the latest year for which information is available, 253,400[1] claims[2] to sickness benefit were unsuccessful because the national insurance contribution conditions were not satisfied. It is not known how many of these refusals might have involved claimants who had not received credits for a period of study.

Notes:

1. Information from a 1 per cent. sample of claimants.
2. A 'claim' means a claim submitted at the beginning of a spell of incapacity for work. If a person has several separate spells of incapacity for work during the year, each spell is counted as a claim.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the average clearance times for reviews of attendance allowance (a) for requests made in March 1991, (b) for requests made in November 1991 and (c) for requests made in March 1992;

(2) what is the average length of time taken for attendance allowance initial claims to be processed by the attendance allowance unit at Norcross (a) for claims made in January 1991, (b) for claims made in November 1991, (c) for claims made in February 1992 and (d) for claims made in April 1992.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate costs.

Injury and Occupational Disease (Compensation)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend the regulations so that claimants for compensation through injury or occupational disease do not have to pay back state benefits after their claim has been settled when the level of compensation is over £2,500.

Miss Widdecombe: The principle that accident victims should not be compensated twice has been a feature of the social security scheme since 1948. The compensation recovery scheme has merely replaced the old and inconsistent arrangements, by which negligent employers and other compensators gained at the expense of the taxpayer. The scheme is working well and there are no plans for major change.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Miss Widdecombe: Government Departments, including their executive agencies, are required to pay their bills promptly. The timing of payment should normally be stipulated in Government contracts. Where there is no contractual provision or other understanding, Departments should pay within 30 days of receipt of goods/services or the presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment, whichever is the later.

To help encourage prompt payment of bills by Government contractors to their subcontractors all Government contracts are to contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay its sub-contractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the sub-contractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—a Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Miss Widdecombe: "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. Guidelines on purchasing by Government Departments already exist and are distributed by HM Treasury.

The Department of Employment has been undertaking a survey of the prompt payment record of Government Departments during the financial year 1991-92 and the results of this exercise will be published in the near future by the Department of Trade and Industry, which now has responsibility for small firms issues, including late payment. After studying these results the Department will consider what further measures, if any, may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by the public sector.

Spending Power

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average increase in net weekly spending power of a man with two children of seven and 11 years and a non-working wife for each extra pound he earns if he increases his pay from *(a)* £100 to £110, *(b)* £110 to £120, *(c)* £120 to £130, *(d)* £130 to £140 and *(e)* £140 to £150 assuming he pays average rent and community charge.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the tables. The assumptions used are those in the published tax benefit model tables, a copy of which is available in the Library. Each family is assumed to pay the estimated 1991-92 average local authority rent of £26·03. Community charge is included at an illustrative level of £4·70 per week.

It should be noted that the results in the tables cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large. The tables use illustrative rents and do not, therefore, reflect the full range of housing costs which people may face.

Married couple with two children aged 7 and 11
Rent: £26·03
Community Charge: £9·40

Gross earnings	*Take home pay*	*Family credit*	*Child benefit*	*Rent rebate*	*Community charge benefit*	*Total net income*	*Net income after rent and community charge*
Earnings £100-110							
100·00	94·64	49·02	17·45	0·51	1·63	163·25	127·82
101·00	95·35	48·52	17·45	0·00	1·60	162·92	127·49
102·00	96·06	48·03	17·45	0·00	1·57	163·11	127·68
103·00	96·77	47·53	17·45	0·00	1·53	163·28	127·85
104·00	97·48	47·03	17·45	0·00	1·50	163·46	128·03
105·00	98·14	46·53	17·45	0·00	1·47	163·64	128·21
106·00	98·90	46·04	17·45	0·00	1·44	163·83	128·40
107·00	99·61	45·54	17·45	0·00	1·41	164·01	128·58
108·00	100·32	45·04	17·45	0·00	1·38	164·19	128·76
109·00	101·03	44·55	17·45	0·00	1·34	164·37	128·94
110·00	101·74	44·05	17·45	0·00	1·31	164·55	129·12

Gross earnings	Take home pay	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent rebate	Community charge benefit	Total net income	Net income after rent and community charge
Earnings £111-120							
111·00	102·45	43·55	17·45	0·00	1·28	164·73	129·30
112·00	103·16	43·06	17·45	0·00	1·25	164·92	129·49
113·00	103·87	42·56	17·45	0·00	1·21	165·09	129·66
114·00	104·58	42·06	17·45	0·00	1·18	165·27	129·84
115·00	105·29	41·56	17·45	0·00	1·15	165·45	130·02
116·00	106·00	41·07	17·45	0·00	1·12	165·64	130·21
117·00	106·71	40·57	17·45	0·00	1·09	165·82	130·39
118·00	107·42	40·07	17·45	0·00	1·06	166·00	130·57
119·00	108·13	39·58	17·45	0·00	1·02	166·18	130·75
120·00	108·84	39·08	17·45	0·00	0·99	166·36	130·93
Earnings £121-130							
121·00	109·55	38·58	17·45	0·00	0·96	166·54	131·11
122·00	110·26	38·09	17·45	0·00	0·93	166·73	131·30
123·00	110·97	37·59	17·45	0·00	0·90	166·91	131·48
124·00	111·68	37·09	17·45	0·00	0·86	167·08	131·65
125·00	112·39	36·59	17·45	0·00	0·83	167·26	131·83
126·00	113·10	36·10	17·45	0·00	0·80	167·45	132·02
127·00	113·81	35·60	17·45	0·00	0·77	167·63	132·20
128·00	114·52	35·10	17·45	0·00	0·74	167·81	132·38
129·00	115·23	34·61	17·45	0·00	0·70	167·99	132·56
130·00	115·94	34·11	17·45	0·00	0·67	168·17	132·74
Earnings £131-140							
131·00	116·65	33·61	17·45	0·00	0·64	168·35	132·92
132·00	117·36	33·12	17·45	0·00	0·61	168·54	133·11
133·00	118·07	32·62	17·45	0·00	0·58	168·72	133·29
134·00	118·78	32·12	17·45	0·00	0·54	168·89	133·46
135·00	119·49	31·62	17·45	0·00	0·51	169·07	133·64
136·00	120·20	31·13	17·45	0·00	0·48	169·26	133·83
137·00	120·91	30·63	17·45	0·00	0·45	169·44	134·01
138·00	121·61	30·14	17·45	0·00	0·42	169·62	134·19
139·00	122·27	29·68	17·45	0·00	0·39	169·79	134·36
140·00	122·93	29·22	17·45	0·00	0·36	169·96	134·53
Earnings £141-150							
141·00	123·59	28·75	17·45	0·00	0·33	170·12	134·69
142·00	124·25	28·29	17·45	0·00	0·30	170·29	134·86
143·00	124·91	27·83	17·45	0·00	0·27	170·46	135·03
144·00	125·57	27·37	17·45	0·00	0·24	170·63	135·20
145·00	126·23	26·91	17·45	0·00	0·21	170·80	135·37
146·00	126·89	26·44	17·45	0·00	0·18	170·96	135·53
147·00	127·55	25·98	17·45	0·00	0·15	171·13	135·70
148·00	128·21	25·52	17·45	0·00	0·12	171·30	135·87
149·00	128·87	25·06	17·45	0·00	0·09	171·47	136·04
150·00	129·53	24·60	17·45	0·00	0·06	171·64	136·21

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the future of the European Community Helios programme for people with disabilities.

Mr. Scott: The Council of Ministers is currently considering the European Commission's proposals for the Helios II programme and the European Parliament's opinion is awaited. The Government supported all aspects of the Helios I programme from 1988 to 1991 and is expecting to receive shortly the final report of an independent evaluation carried out by a team of researchers from Southampton university.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list all the United Kingdom participants in the European Community TIDE programme and the nature of each project; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his estimate of receipts in the United Kingdom during the current year from the TIDE programme; what proportion this represents of total European Community expenditure on the programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: TIDE (technology initiative for disabled and elderly people) is a research and development pilot action managed by the Commission of European Communities. The Commission has published synopses of the pilot action projects listing all the participants a copy of which will be placed in the Library. The funding allocated to each project has not been disclosed by the Commission.

Local Offices

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many staff, full-time equivalent, were employed in each of the three local offices in the Newham district benefits agency for each quarter in 1991 in *(a)* income support, *(b)* contributions, *(c)* direct payments, *(d)* social fund, *(e)* fraud, *(f)* child support and *(g)* total; and what is the current position for the latest date for which he has figures.

Mr. Burt: The staffing of Benefits Agency offices is a matter for Mr Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Maintenance Payments

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take action to prevent official pressure being put on women to name fathers for maintenance purposes.

Mr. Burt: There is currently no requirement for a mother to name the father of her child when claiming social security benefits, though more than three-quarters of never-married mothers do so voluntarily. From April 1993, when the Child Support Agency is established, there will be a legal requirement for parents in receipt of prescribed benefits to co-operate in obtaining maintenance for their children. Taxpayers, many of whom have families of their own, should not have to shoulder the responsibility of providing for children where the natural parents are able to do so. However, the matter will be dealt with sympathetically by trained officers and the requirement will be waived where there are reasonable grounds for believing that compliance would risk causing harm to undue distress to the mother or any child living with her.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Burt: For information from 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1990-91, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 12 November 1991 at col. *478*.

For 1991-92 the information is as follows:

Department of Social Security and its agencies (other than Benefits Agency)

	£ millions
Expenditure in 1991-92	
for television advertising was	4·396
for radio advertising was	0·626
for newspaper advertising was	0·772
for other information material was	4·552

Provision for the 1992-93 Social Security budget is £13·68 million. Decisions on media have not been made.

The Benefits Agency

For expenditure for 1991-92

for television, radio and press advertising was NIL;

for other materials (leaflets, posters, etc) was £6·55 million.

Provision for the 1992-93 Benefits Agency budget is £8·261 million.

Claimant Eligibility

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, columns *288-89*, for which benefits his Department has an estimate of the numbers eligible to claim it.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information is contained in the estimates of take-up of income-related benefits for 1987; these relate to housing benefit, family income supplement and supplementary benefit, copies of which are available in the Library.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* The Department, including its executive agencies, asks staff to complete questionnaires on their ethnic origin on a voluntary basis. As at 15 April 1992 3,237 of the 64,564 staff who responded to the questionnaire were from ethnic minorities. The breakdown of respondents, for the Department as a whole, and by grades 1-7 is in the table.

Grade[1]	*Number of respondents from an ethnic minority*	*Percentage of respondents*
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	1	9
4	0	0
5	3	3.4
6	18	10
7	7	1.5
Others	3,208	5
Total for Department	3,237	5

[1]Includes professional equivalents.

Pensions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total difference (in current prices) between (a) the cumulative cost of the single pension paid to an individual since April 1979 to date, and (b) the cumulative cost of the single pension paid had the link between the rise in earnings and the rise in the pension been sustained: and what are the comparable figures for the married couples pensions.

Miss Widdecombe *[pursuant to her reply, 18 May 1992, columns 22-28]:* The following information was incorrect:

"The cumulative difference in cost had pensions been uprated by the higher of earnings or prices from April 1980 to date would be £7,690 million."

The corrected version is:

"The cumulative difference in cost had pensions been uprated by the higher of earnings or prices from April 1980 to date would be £43,136 million."

In the original reply the cost for one year (1992-93) was given instead of the cumulative cost as requested.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Departmental Pay Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many full-time and part-time employees in his Department earn less than £3·40 an hour.

Mr. Eggar: At 30 April 1992 there were 794 full-time and 33 part-time employees in the Department of Trade and Industry earning less than £3·40 an hour.

British Coal

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list measures for job retraining programmes and other assistance his Department is planning for mineworkers who will be made redundant following privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: A range of programmes and measures is already available to assist people and communities affected by redundancies in the coal industry. The Government will continue to support and encourage initiatives which bring real benefits to coal-mining areas. Specifically, the Government have clearly stated their commitment to increasing the support for the job creation, resettlement and retraining activities of British Coal Enterprise. The European Community RECHAR initiative, which is aimed at providing the economic regeneration of coal-mining areas, will also bring benefits of at least £124 million to such areas.

Bank Fees (Report)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received the copy of the report by Rochester Research which has been sent to him concerning the levels of fees to small businesses charged by Lloyds and Midland banks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: I have not received a copy of this report.

Bank Mergers

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answers of 15 May 1992 to the hon. Members for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) and for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), *Official Report*, column *232*, when he expects to receive advice from the Director General of Fair Trading on the possible offer from Lloyds bank for Midland bank.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading submitted his advice on the proposed acquisition by Lloyds Bank plc of Midland Bank plc to the President of the Board of Trade on 20 May. The President announced his decision to refer the proposed acquisition to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, in accordance with the director general's advice, on 22 May.

Footwear (Chinese Imports)

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take action to restrict imports of footwear from China into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: My Department is currently considering a proposal from the European Commission to introduce a Community wide quantitative restriction for the rest of this year on imports of certain types of footwear from China. Such a measure, if agreed, would replace the differing national quotas which most member states—including the UK— presently apply to direct imports from there.

Consultants Fees

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Eggar: Information on the fees paid to management consultants before 1984-85 was not kept in a form in which it could be separately identifiable. The information for subsequent years is as follows, although it has not always been possible to disaggregate expenditure on management consultancy from other forms of consultancy such as in information technology. The figures do not include fees paid by DTI agencies operating on a net running costs regime or as trading funds. The apparent reduction between 1986-87 and 1991-92 is a result of the shift of expenditure towards programme-related consultancies for which separate records are not kept. The figure for 1992-93, which takes into account the merger with the old Department of Energy, represents the allocation to management consultancy as a result of the Department's annual activity and resource management review.

	£000s
1984-85	6,104
1985-86	6,417
1986-87	4,650
1987-88	3,050
1988-89	2,516
1989-90	3,168
1990-91	2,771
1991-92	1,884
1992-93	2,504

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total sum paid out in fees by the Department of Energy to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested for the years up to 1980-81 is no longer available and for 1981-82 to 1983-84 is available only at disproportionate cost. Expenditure by the Department of Energy on management consultancies for 1984-85 onwards is as follows:

Financial year	Expenditure
1984-85	53,328
1985-86	31,209
1986-87	30,101
1987-88	35,451
1988-89	27,496
1989-90	6,317
1990-91	14,683
1991-92	43,481

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93;

(2) if he will give the total expenditure by Department of Energy on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: Expenditure by the two Departments on press and public relations in 1991-92 was as follows:

Department of Trade and Industry, £2,719.000.
Department of Energy, £705,000.

DTI expenditure in 1992-93, covering trade, industry and energy issues, is expected to be of the order of £3,160,000. The figures include regional press officer and other support services.

For the equivalent expenditure in earlier years I refer the hon. Member to previous answers:

Department of Trade and Industry
Official Report 13 March 1990, column *172*; 30 April 1991, column *127*; and 5 November 1991, column *62*.
Department of Energy
Official Report 30 April 1991, column *107*.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by the Department of Energy between 1 November 1991 and its abolition.

Mr. Eggar: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Trade and Industry has not carried out any public opinion surveys in this period.

Weights and Measures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of *(a)* public houses and *(b)* garages were inspected by weights and measures inspectors by local authority areas in 1981, 1988, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Leigh: Although the President receives annual reports from each local weights and measures authority, these reports do not contain specific information relating to public houses and garages.

Coal Privatisation

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to provide, under the coal industry privatisation, for the continuation of supply of free or subsidised fuel to miners and miners' widows and dependants on the same terms as at present; and what consideration has been given to paying compensation in its place, either *(a)* as a lump sum or *(b)* as periodical payments.

Mr. Eggar: The Government will ensure that existing concessionary fuel entitlements from British Coal will be safeguarded following privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if former miners and miners' widows and dependants will be given written and full details of the impact of privatisation on their pension arrangements and their fuel allowance before any shares are sold.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) on 20 May, *Official Report*, column *156*.

No decisions have been taken on the form or timing of privatisation.

Fraud (Tax Havens)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he proposes to take to prevent frauds, criminal activities and other losses being perpetrated in the United Kingdom by trusts, companies and individuals controlled from Liechtenstein and other tax havens.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department is firmly committed to measures to prevent fraudulent activities. My Department works closely with regulatory authorities in the United Kingdom and overseas to protect investors against fraudulent activity by companies and individuals. I welcome the growing number of countries which, like the United Kingdom, now have powers to carry out investigations for foreign authorities.

Maxwell Companies

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the minutes of the relevant meetings and other relevant correspondence of those persons in his Department who were involved in the granting of licences or approvals to deal in securities to any companies associated with the late Mr. Maxwell.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list in respect of *(a)* Maxwell and East European Partners plc, formerly Bishopsgate International Investment Management plc, *(b)* Bishopsgate Investment Management Ltd. and *(c)* any other company associated with the late Mr. Maxwell to which his Department granted licences or approvals to deal in securities, the names of each director and any notified prospective director of each company at the date of the application, the date of approval, and the date the company ceased to hold the licence or approval;

(2) if he will list in respect of *(a)* Maxwell and East European Partners plc, formerly Bishopsgate International Investment Management plc, *(b)* Bishopsgate Investment Management Ltd. and *(c)* any other company associated with the late Mr. Maxwell to which his Department granted licences or approvals to deal in securities, (i) details of any securities trading which any of the companies notified the Department it has carried out prior to approval; and (ii) the date on which each company applied for, was granted and ceased to hold such licences or approvals.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Department granted a licence under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 to London and Bishopsgate International Investment Management plc, LBI. LBI applied for a licence on 28 February 1988. A licence was granted on 25 April 1988. It came into effect on 26 April 1988 and lapsed on 29 April 1988 when the relevant parts of the Financial Services Act came into force. The directors were notified as Mr Andrew Smith, Mr Kevin Maxwell and Mr Larry Trachtenberg.

LBI did not notify the Department of any securities trading carried out before the licence was granted.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment of the previous references to Mr Maxwell in reports by inspectors acting on behalf of his Department was made when his Department granted licences to deal in securities to (a) Maxwell and East European Partners plc, (b) Bishopsgate Investment Management Ltd. and (c) any other company associated with the late Mr Maxwell which was authorised to deal in securities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Department carried out the usual checks in connection with the application for a

licence from London & Bishopsgate International Management plc. Mr. Robert Maxwell was not a director of LBI when the licence was granted.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list in respect of (a) Maxwell and East European Partners, formerly Bishopsgate International Investment Management plc, (b) Bishopsgate Investment Management Ltd. and (c) any other company associated with the late Mr. Maxwell to which his Department granted licences or approvals to deal in securities the names of the shareholders and notified prospective shareholders at the date of the application, the date of approval and the date the company ceased to hold the licence for approval.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Applications for licences under the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 did not require the disclosure of the names of shareholders.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will initiate an enquiry into the extent of losses to the United Kingdom economy and private individuals over the last 20 years as a result of frauds and other criminal or loss inducing activities perpetrated by trusts, companies or individuals controlled from Liechtenstein or other tax havens.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library copies of the files regarding the application, authorisation and approval of (a) Maxwell and East European Partners (b) Bishopsgate Investment Management Ltd. and (c) any other company associated with the late Mr. Maxwell which obtained licences or approvals to deal in securities from his Department.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of the total work force in his Department is registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: A total of 1·1 per cent. of the Department's workforce is registered as disabled. The Department also employs a number of people who are known to be disabled but have chosen not to register.

The Department fully accepts the responsibilities laid down by the civil service code of practice on the employment of disabled people and has taken steps to try to increase the number of disabled recruits.

Plutonium (Transport)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received raising concerns over the emergency plans existing for the transport of plutonium from Sellafield to Japan via the Panama canal and Pacific ocean.

Mr. Eggar: I know of no proposals for such a transport operation.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication, "Making the Cash Flow—a Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers."

Mr. Leigh: "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. Guidelines on purchasing by Government Departments already exist and are distributed by HM Treasury.

The Department of Employment has been undertaking a survey of the prompt payment record of Government Departments during the financial year 1991-92 and the results of this exercise will be published in the near future by the Department of Trade and Industry, which now has responsibility for small firms issues, including late payment. After studying these results the Department will consider what further measures, if any, may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by the public sector.

Electricity

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what study his Department has made into the impact on electricity users of changes to voltage and systems to bring the United Kingdom into line with the German system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Government are aware of a proposal by CENELEC, the European Standards Committee for electricity, to move to a standardised nominal voltage of 230 volts throughout the European Community and EFTA countries. The Government will be consulting the electricity industry, equipment manufacturers and consumer organisations about the implications of the proposal.

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received following the public inquiry into Kelt UK Ltd's plans for a gas-fired electricity generating station at West Knapton, north Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have received three such representations.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what financial contribution Her Majesty's Government makes towards the operation of the International Atomic Energy Agency; and what plans his Department has to increase that contribution.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom's contribution to the International Atomic Energy Agency for 1992 is £6·5 million. The contribution for 1993 will depend on the decision to be taken this year by the agency's board of governors as well as by any revision of the United Nations scale for assessing contributions.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will give separate figures for the spending by the Department of Energy on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)*

radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92;

(2) if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Eggar: Expenditure by the two Departments in 1991-92 was as follows (£000):

	Department of Trade and Industry[1]	*Department of Energy*
Television advertising	2	Nil
Radio advertising	4	Nil
Newspaper advertising	345	615
Other promotional material	[2]3,502	[3]1,079

[1]Central publicity budget.
[2]Publications, audio-visual materials and posters.
[3]Publications only.

For the equivalent expenditure in earlier years I refer the hon. Member to previous answers:

Department of Trade and Industry
Official Report 5 November 1991, columns *63-64;* 29 April 1991, column *56;* and 13 March 1990; column *173*
Department of Energy
Official Report 5 November 1991, column *67;* and 25 April 1991, column *500.*

Media allocations for 1992-93 will be made according to need during the year.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Wallace: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what is the target of Her Majesty's Government for the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources of energy in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Scotland by (i) the year 2000 and (ii) 2010;

(2) what steps his Department is taking to achieve the European Community recommendation that each member state generates 5 to 6 per cent. of its energy from renewable sources of energy by the year 2000.

Mr. Eggar: Targets for the exploitation of renewable energy are under consideration as part of the review of the Government's renewable energy programme, which will be reported in due course.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set a target for electricity from renewable sources at 10 per cent. of total supply by the year 2000.

Mr. Eggar: Targets for the exploitation of renewable energy are under consideration as part of the review of the Government's renewable energy programme, which will be reported in due course.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received a copy of the Energy Committee's Fourth Report, Session 1991-92, on "Renewable Energy Technologies and Prospects"; and what response he plans to make.

Mr. Eggar: The Energy Select Committee's fourth report was received shortly after publication and the response is currently under consideration.

Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the firms or individuals invited to tender for each of the consultant appointments given in his answer of 15 May, *Official Report,* column *231-32;* and which ones submitted tenders.

Mr. Eggar: Several organisations were invited to tender and a number submitted tenders. Those organisations submitting tenders did so in confidence.

Red Mercury Compounds

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken *(a)* within the United Kingdom and *(b)* in concert with his European Community counterparts to block the trade in red mercury compounds used in the manufacture of nuclear warheads.

Mr. Needham: I am advised that the substance known as red mercury has long been incorrectly associated with capabilities in nuclear weapons development. Mercury oxide and mercury sulphide, whether or not in the form which gives them their red colour, are not subject to export control from the UK.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Barry field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those inhabited offshore islands within the United Kingdom taxation regime that do not have assisted area status.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are a number of inhabited offshore islands that are subject to the United Kingdom tax regime but which do not have assisted area status, including the Isle of Wight in England and the Orkney and Shetland islands, Islay, Jura, Colonsay and Mull in Scotland.

Photocopying Costs

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce regulations to control the amounts loaned by finance and leasing companies in respect of photocopying machines used in cost per copy photocopy agreements.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. I welcome the recent initiatives by the Finance and Leasing Association and the Director General of Fair Trading in this area. Leasing documentation should be clear and specific, enabling prospective lesses to decide whether a cost per copy facility is more appropriate.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will investigate the profits made from cost per copy photocopying agreements by Anglio Leasing, its subsidiary RML leasing, and Palace Leasing.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no powers to make such an investigation.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ask the Director General of Fair Trading to extend his recent inquiry into malpractice in the photocopying industry to cover business practices of leasing companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading has a general statutory duty to make himself aware of activities which may adversely affect the interests of consumers in the United Kingdom. If the hon. Member has evidence of such activities it should be brought to the attention of the director general so that he may consider what action, if any, may be appropriate under the legislation for which he is responsible.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate the value to leasing companies of cost per copy photocopying agreements.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. Such agreements are likely to vary too widely in their size and terms for such an estimate to be feasible.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will cancel all present and planned building of nuclear power stations, close down existing Magnox reactors and phase out advance gas-cooled reactors.

Mr. Eggar: No. The Government will undertake a full-scale review of the future prospects for nuclear power in the UK in 1994. Until then, the UK's existing stations will be operated to the highest standards of safety and as efficiently as possible. Nuclear Electric plc will complete the construction of Sizewell B.

Government Subsidies

Mr. John Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the annual Government subsidies to the British nuclear and coal industries for each year since 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of financial support given to the coal industry by Government since 1982-83 is as follows—outturn prices:

	£ million
1982-83	521
1983-84	1,146
1984-85	2,414
1985-86	563
1986-87	882
1987-88	677
1988-89	297
1989-90	7,243
1990-91	141
1991-92	448

No Government subsidies have been paid to Nuclear Electric plc or BNFL. Both these companies are recipients of the fossil fuel levy paid by electricity suppliers. The Government have, however, been the customer for research and development and other programmes undertaken by the Atomic Energy Authority and have funded those programmes and the consequences of those programmes.

Ministerial responsibility for Scottish Nuclear Limited rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Registrar of Companies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had and what representations he has received concerning the actions of the registrar of Companies house in terminating his consultation arrangements with the Companies House Users Group; and if he will make a statement on the future quality of public access to commercial data statutorily provided to and via Companies house.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To the best of my knowledge the President has had no consultations and received no representations about Companies House User Group. As an executive agency, the day-to-day management of Companies House is the responsibility of the chief executive and any arrangements made with users are a matter for him. He has been asked to write to the hon. Member. As to the future quality of public access to commercial data the chief executive has recently introduced a total quality programme with the aim of achieving a higher standard of quality in all aspects of its work.

Mersey Barrage

Mr. Alton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about funding arrangements for tidal energy schemes and their implications for the construction of a barrage on the River Mersey.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1979-80 the Government have spent £10·5 million on work on tidal power. The objective of the Government's programme on tidal power is to reduce the technical, economic, regional and environmental uncertainties associated with tidal barrages through a number of site and generic studies.

The Government have already contributed £2·5 million towards feasibility studies completed at a cost of £5 million on the River Mersey tidal barrage project. The Government are funding a further £1·2 million of the £1·5 million cost of the current stage of studies. A decision on any further work on the Mersey barrage will be considered when this current phase of work is completed later this year.

Lloyd's of London

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will consider holding an official public inquiry into the operation of Lloyd's of London.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Sir David Walker is currently conducting an investigation into allegations of malpractice, including insider trading, at Lloyd's. Sir Jeremy Morse chairs a working group studying governance of the market. There are independent loss reviews inquiring into the circumstances of losses of the worst affected syndicates. Any further inquiry would not help the work now in progress.

Monopoly References

Mr. Luff: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to review the power of the Director General of Fair Trading to make a monopoly reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission without his approval.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: There are no plans for such a review. When the Director General of Fair Trading makes a monopoly reference the Secretary of State may, within 14 days of publication of the reference, direct the MMC not to proceed with the reference. To date this power of veto has never been exercised.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects the GATT talks to reopen.

Mr. Needham: Talks are continuing on the outstanding issues between the participants in the Uruguay round of GATT negotiations. These include both formal GATT meetings and informal contacts between the parties. Vice-President Andriessen, the Commissioner who leads for the European Community in the talks, had discussions in Washington last week with the United States Secretary of State James Baker. These made useful progress and will, we hope, contribute to bringing the Uruguay round to an early successful conclusion.

Registrar of Companies

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those trading organisations that do not have to file reports and accounts with the Registrar of Companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Companies Acts require that all limited companies, whether trading or not, deliver accounts to the registrar. However, an unlimited company is not subject to this requirement unless it is a subsidiary, or parent of a limited company, or carries on business as the promoter of a trading stamps scheme. These provisions do not apply to other trading organisations.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with the Registrar of Companies House concerning the present strategic review of Companies House; and if he will place a copy of such review, when completed, in the Library.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The strategic review of Companies House executive agency was initiated with the approval of my predecessor. It is anticipated that the review will be completed in early 1993 and I shall be consulting with the chief executive of Companies House during this period. The strategic plan which will emerge from the review will be submitted to me for approval when completed and I shall consider at the time whether the plan should be placed in the Library.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to halt nuclear reprocessing at Sellafield and Dounreay and cancel THORP at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: No.

RECHAR

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he intends to take to reimburse qualifying local authorities for expenditure incurred during the last financial year on the assumption of receiving RECHAR moneys.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* In accordance with article 15(2) of Council regulation (EEC) No. 4253/88, expenditure may be considered eligible for structural funds assistance under the United Kingdom's RECHAR programmes if incurred after the date on which the programme applications reached the European Commission—26 July 1990. Priorities for the allocation of RECHAR grant money will be considered by the programme monitoring committees.

Personal Protective Equipment

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when will the personal protective equipment directive be enacted; how long the transitional period will be; and what products will be covered.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* The draft regulations to transpose the requirements of the personal protective equipment directive into national law will be issued for public consultation soon with a view to their enactment shortly thereafter. The directive contains details of the transitional arrangements but the European Commission is considering possible changes. Until precise details are known, the regulations are being drafted to reflect the current situation under article 5.3 of the directive. The directive contains guidance on the products covered.

Industrial Gloves

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether it is intended that under the personal protective equipment directive industrial gloves can be sold during the transitional period without being tested against the national standard.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* The European Commission is considering a possible extension to the transition period as currently provided under article 5.3 of the personal protective equipment directive, 89/686/EEC. Until the precise details of any amendment are known, the arrangements during the transition period remain as set out in that directive.

Energy Technology Support Unit

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the energy technology support unit.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* The ETSU is a unit within the UK Atomic Energy Authority which provides management and other services to a number of my Department's energy R and D programmes, including that on renewable energy.

My Department is considering a recommendation in a recent Energy Select Committee report on renewable energy that an analysis be undertaken of the costs and benefits of separating ETSU from the UKAEA in order to demonstrate its impartiality. The Government will be giving their response to the Committee recommendation in due course.

Electricity Savings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has any plans to meet the director of OFFER to discuss initiatives to promote electricity savings.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on 13 May, *Official Report* column *136*.

SCOTLAND

Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was granted to farmers in Scotland through the farm and conservation grant scheme—heather and woodland regeneration section—in 1990-91.

Mr. Lang: £15,973 was paid for heather and woodland generation in Scotland in 1990-91.

Farm Diversification

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was granted to farmers in Scotland in 1990-91 through the farm diversification scheme; and if he will give a breakdown of this expenditure between the various activities eligible for grants.

Mr. Lang: £114,055 was paid in grants under the farm diversification grant scheme in Scotland in 1990-91. A breakdown of these figures by the various eligible enterprises is as follows.

Enterprise type	*Grant paid* £
Tourist accommodation	60,775
Horse enterprises	22,732
Food processing	21,123
Catering	2,300
Farm shop	2,250
Non-food agricultural produce	1,225
Feasibility and marketing	3,650
	114,055

Social Workers, Ayr

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will investigate the implications of the Ayr sheriff court finding which concluded that social workers distorted facts in a children in care situation with respect to one family; and if he will make a statement on the wider implications of the finding of Ayr sheriff court for children in other families with whom Ayr social workers have been dealing.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I understand that a complaint has been made to the procurator fiscal about the actions of social workers involved in a case concerning children in Ayrshire. This complaint is under investigation and it would not be proper for me to comment on it or any implications arising from it.

Fluoride

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress that has been made in artificially increasing the fluoride content of the water supply in Scotland during the most recent 12-month period for which information is available.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* Guidance on the implementation of schemes to fluoridate public water supplies was issued to health boards and water authorities in Scotland in June 1991. This included advice that the Scottish Office is prepared to consider assistance of up to 60 per cent of the capital costs of schemes.

No schemes have yet been introduced in Scotland, but consideration is being given to the matter by health boards in many areas, in conjunction with water authorities to which decisions in relation to fluoridation ultimately fall.

Whisky

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of people directly employed in the Scotch whisky industry in each of the regional authorities of Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* Employment figures are available only for plants manufacturing Scotch whisky as their principal product and employing 11 or more employees in 1990, the latest year for which figures are available.

Manufacturing employment in the whisky industry in 1990 by regional authority (rounded to the nearest 100)

Region	*Number of employees*
Borders	0
Central	300
Dumfries and Galloway	0
Fife	1,100
Grampian	1,100
Highland	400
Lothian	1,600
Strathclyde	5,200
Tayside	600
Islands	100
Scotland	10,500

Source: The Scottish Office Industry Department Scottish Register of Employment.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the current breakdown of employment activity in the Scotch whisky industry by *(a)* maltings, *(b)* distilleries, *(c)* maturation warehouses, *(d)* blending and bottling plants, *(e)* distribution warehouses, *(f)* by-products, *(g)* offices, *(h)* visitor centres and *(i)* others; and what was the comparable situation in 1982.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* This information is unavailable at the level of disaggregation requested. Employment figures are available only for plants manufacturing Scotch whisky as their principal product. Some or all of the activities given in the question may be included in employment for individual plants.

The table shows manufacturing employment in whisky and other related industries in Scotland in plants employing 11 or more employees in 1982 and 1990, the latest year for which figures are available.

Manufacturing employment in whisky and other related industries

	Scotland
1982	18,000
1990	10,500

Source: The Scottish Office Industry Department Scottish Register of Employment.

European Drugs Monitoring Squad

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria is to be used by the Scottish Office in recruiting staff to serve on the European drugs monitoring squad; how many staff he expects to be recruited to serve in Scotland; and what central resourcing will be made available.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* Detailed negotiations about the establishment of a European drug monitoring centre are still under way and the final text of the required regulation has yet to be agreed with our Community partners. Once the modalities and structure for the centre have been agreed we will be addressing the issues of resourcing and staffing.

Drug Addicts

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest total number of registered drug addicts for each type of drug in each region in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* Information on addicts notified to the Home Office from Scotland is collected on a health board rather than regional basis. The total number of addicts notified to the Home Office by health board and by type of drug in 1991 is shown in the table.

Drug addicts notified to the Home office during 1991 by type of drug[1] to which addiction was reported and Health Board[2]

Scotland Health Board of notifier	Type of drug							Number of persons	
	Heroin	Methadone	Dipipanone	Cocaine	Morphine	Pethidine	Dextromoramide	Opium	All addicts
Scotland	752	714	96	27	99	9	32	1	1,480
Argyll and Clyde	46	7	8	1	1	—	4	—	55
Ayrshire and Arran	24	8	2	2	4	1	1	—	30
Borders	2	3	—	1	—	—	—	—	5
Dumfries and Galloway	15	26	5	—	1	—	—	—	35
Fife	41	6	2	1	2	—	1	—	48
Forth Valley	112	84	11	3	4	1	2	—	191
Grampian	85	86	30	6	45	1	6	—	170
Greater Glasgow	306	31	15	4	31	1	9	—	352
Highland	3	2	2	—	—	3	2	—	8
Lanarkshire	39	7	2	—	1	—	2	—	46
Lothian	55	292	11	7	8	1	4	1	353
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tayside	24	162	8	2	2	1	1	—	187
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] As an addict can be reported as addicted to more than one notifiable drug the figures for individual drugs cannot be added together to produce totals.

[2] Where an addict was notified more than once in 1991, this refers to the health board of the doctor who made the first notification.

EC Cohesion Fund

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what measures his Department is taking to publicise the funds available for environmental projects and transport infrastructure through the EC cohesion fund; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what mechanisms are being put in place to allow regions in Scotland to take advantage of the funds that will be made available through the EC cohesion fund; what representations he has received so far on the subject of the cohesion fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* No assistance will be available to Scotland through the cohesion fund which was agreed in principle at the European Council at Maastricht. Under the protocol on economic and social cohesion, the fund will assist EC member states whose per capita GNP is less than 90 per cent. of the Community average—Portugal, Spain, Greece and the Republic of Ireland—provided they meet certain macro-economic policy conditions. No measures have therefore been taken to publicise the cohesion fund in Scotland and no representations on this matter have been received.

TRANSPORT

Birmingham Relief Road

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the 1988 inquiry report on the proposal for a Birmingham northern relief road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. The draft orders which were the subject of the inquiry have been withdrawn.

Railways

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list his safety and regulatory powers under railways legislation.

Mr. Roger Freeman: The responsibility for running a safe and efficient railway is placed by statute on British Rail. The Secretary of State has safety powers under the Regulation of Railways Act 1871, the Railway Employment (Prevention of Accidents) Act 1900, the Road and Rail Traffic Act 1933 and level crossing enactments. The powers relate to the approval and inspection of new works, the making of safety rules, and to the investigation of accidents. More detailed information is contained in appendix 11 of the 1990 annual report on the safety record of railways, copies of which are in the Library. Some of these powers are amended by the Transport and Works Act 1992.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the service provided by British Rail on the Fenchurch Street, Tilbury, Southend line meets the specified quality targets set by his predecessor in December 1989.

Mr. Roger Freeman: Between January and April of this year, the London, Tilbury and Southend line achieved, on average, the target set in 1989 for peak punctuality. This is most encouraging and reflects the efforts of British Rail staff on the line. Reliability remains a problems and was

below target over the same period. BR has told me that the current £50 million resignalling programme is the key to improving reliability.

Parking Spaces (Disabled People)

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will introduce legislation to enable an automatic fine to be imposed on motorists illegally occupying designated parking spaces for the disabled.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is already an offence for an able-bodied person to use a parking place reserved for an orange badge holder on the public highway or in a local authority off-street car park which has been designated by an order made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The offence carries a maximum penalty of £400.

My Department has no jurisdiction over spaces in private car parks reserved for disabled people. It is for individual operators of these car parks to take whatever steps they consider necessary to see that these spaces are not misused.

Sea Freight

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the value of sea freight between United Kingdom ports in each year from 1983 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Data on the value of sea freight between United Kingdom ports are not available.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Norris: The total expenditure on the Department's press and public relations office since 1984-85 is as follows:

Year	*£*
1984-85	339,426
1985-86	354,393
1986-87	363,446
1987-88	389,473
1988-89	437,950
1989-90	451,214
1990-91	517,905
1991-92	587,665
[1]1992-93	614,109

[1]Budget.

These figures cover the overall costs of running the press office, calculated using the ready reckoner for staff-related costs.

Before 1984-85 the information division was a common service of the Departments of Transport and the Environment and the Property Services Agency.

London Taxis (Seat Belts)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when London taxis first had fixing points for rear seat belts; and what estimate he has of the number of London taxis with fixing points but without rear seat belts.

Mr. Norris: From 1 April 1982 new London taxis were required to be fitted with anchorages for rear seat belts. All cabs manufactured since 1 April 1987 must be fitted with seat belts for forward-facing passengers.

Cabs licensed to carry four persons must be fitted with two inertia reel type seat belts and an additional lap type seat belt must be fitted to cabs licensed to carry five persons. Cabs manufactured prior to 1 April 1987 may be fitted with approved type seat belts, but they are not compulsory. Where there is provision for a wheelchair passenger, an approved type seat belt must be fitted.

There is not available data on the number of London taxis with fixing points but without rear seat belts. However I understand that at present 8,250 London taxis are fitted with seat belts.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consult on requiring the fitting of rear belts to London taxis with fixing points; if he will estimate the time and cost of fitting rear belts to a London taxi with fixing points; and what tests are made of the safety standards of such rear belts in respect of the ease with which they can be drawn out.

Mr. Norris: I have no plans to require the fitting of rear seat belts to London taxis built between 1 April 1982 and 1 April 1987 which have fixing points. As for private cars, fitting rear seat belts to these vehicles is voluntary.

The cost, inclusive of VAT, of fitting rear seat belts to those taxis with fixing points is estimated as of the order of £130 asssuming approximately one hour's labour.

Seat belts are tested during the vehicle's annual inspection at the Public Carriage Office. Among the things checked are the security of fixture, condition, ability to extend and return and the locking mechanism. The examiners in addition check to ensure that the belts are not hidden behind the seats. The PCO also carries out spot checks at taxi ranks and so on. "Unfit" notices are issued if the belts are defective.

Land Compensation

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what powers he has to offer *ex-gratia* payments for cases where the provisions of the Land Compensation Act 1973 cannot be waived.

Mr. Norris: The Secretary of State is not empowered to make payments under the Land Compensation Act 1973 other than in accordance with the provisions of that Act.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what powers he has to vary the amount of compensation to be paid in cases where his Department admits to a careless error.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend is only permitted to make payments as prescribed in the statute, or on an *ex-gratia* basis in order to relieve hardship caused by official failure or unreasonable delay.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to amend the Land Compensation Act 1973.

Mr. Norris: I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who has responsibility for this matter, has no plans to amend the land Compensation Act 1973.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of the total work force in his Department is registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The percentage of Department of Transport staff registered as disabled at 1 June 1991 was 1.3 per cent.—185. The Department is aware of a further 188 staff who have indicated that they have disabilities but who have not registered. The Department aims to provide access to a full range of recruitment and career opportunities for all people with disabilities. The Department also follows the civil service code of practice on the employment of people with disabilities by, for example, supplying appropriate aids and equipment for staff with disabilities.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what distribution has taken place within this Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication,"Making the Cash Flow—a Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers."

Mr. Norris: The publication has been distributed to all managers within the Department of Transport carrying responsibility for the authorisation of payments to suppliers.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Norris: The Department's policy, in line with the principles of the citizens charter, is to pay all invoices within the contracted period, unless delay is unavoidable because of a dispute or for some other legitimate reason. Where there are no specified terms the policy is to pay invoices within 30 days.

Learner Drivers

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward proposals to make it compulsory for all learner drivers to drive with qualified and registered instructors at all times; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. Freedom to practice under the supervision of a friend or relative who is an experienced qualified driver widens the opportunity for learners to gain experience. Recent research indicates that learner drivers who supplement professional instruction in this way are better prepared for their driving test.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average waiting time for driving tests in *(a)* Paisley, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The average waiting time for driving tests at Paisley is six weeks, in Scotland five weeks, and in Great Britain five weeks. Driving tests in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Department of the Environment.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that the high speed rail link from Ashford to central London will terminate at Stratford, east London, and will follow closely the route devised by Ove Arup; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's preference remains that the rail link should approach London from the east, via Stratford, and terminate at King's Cross. The route is currently being refined on the basis of the broad corridor published last October.

Rail System, Wales

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to support investment for the improvement of existing freight railway lines in Wales so as to enable them to carry passenger traffic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for BR and the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level of investment by British Rail in rolling stock for the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth railway line.

Mr. Freeman: I understand most services on this line are operated by British Rail's flagship diesel unit, the class 158. The remaining services are also operated by modern diesel units—class 150/156s.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning the relative fuel efficiency of rail and road transport and the effect of increased use of rail travel on the natural environment of rural Wales.

Mr. Freeman: A comparison of CO2 emissions per kilometre is a useful indication of the relative fuel efficiency of various modes of transport. We have estimated that a typical regional railway service produces 80 to 85 per cent of the CO2 emissions of an average car per 100 person kilometres travelled. This figure reflects the very low levels of off-peak demand on some rural services which involve relatively long journeys. British Rail's regional railways business is currently undergoing a replacement of rolling stock which, when complete, should lead to a halving in fuel consumption. There is also substantial scope for increased fuel efficiency in road vehicles. The effect of increased rail travel on the natural environment of Wales would depend on the amount of traffic diverted from road and the extent to which new rail services and infrastructure were required.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Norris: The spending by my Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising, and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year is as follows:

£'000

	Television	Radio	Newspaper	Other
1979-80	4,141	62	105	1,532
1980-81	3,502	336	129	1,737
1981-82	3,615	6	410	1,457
1982-83	2,319	98	816	1,415
1983-84	4,655	22	334	1,488
1984-85	1,723	207	476	2,873
1985-86	70	858	834	4,026
1986-87	72	520	738	4,489
1987-88	2,310	50	140	3,010
1988-89	1,867	110	365	3,367
1989-90	1,930	233	982	3,289
1990-91	3,122	145	833	3,962
1991-92	3,870	176	883	4,593

Detailed decisions have not yet been taken on expenditure by media for 1992-93, but the overall figure is expected to be approximately £10 million.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement regarding the possible suspension of air and road links to Yugoslavia.

Mr. Norris: The United Nations Security Council resolution adopted last weekend prohibits any flights of any aircraft coming from or destined for Yugoslavia. It does not extend to road links with Yugoslavia. But there is a total prohibition on the export of all goods to Yugoslavia, except, under certain conditions, food and medical products, and the import of all goods originating from there.

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice his Department is offering to tour operators and scheduled operators who may be affected by any restricted access to Yugoslav airspace; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The United Nations Security Council resolution prohibits landing and take-off at Yugoslav airports. The resolution does not specifically deal with overflying Yugoslavia, but we are considering the implications of the resolution for overflying and the payment by carriers of overflying charges. At the moment our advice is that United Kingdom air lines should avoid overflying Croatia and Bosnia and airspace within 30 nautical miles of the Croatian border with Yugoslavia.

Light Dues

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those EC member states collecting light dues after 1992;

(2) if he will publish his proposals for ending light dues after 1992.

Mr. Norris: Within the EC I understand that only the United Kingdom, Ireland and Greece have systems of light dues; but that Denmark charges its own flag vessels for the use of its Decca radionavigation system. I am unaware of any changes in the position after 1992, and my right hon. Friend has no proposals to end light dues in this country.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total contribution by the Exchequer to light dues charged by the Republic of Ireland in the last financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norris: None.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish his conclusions on light dues, following his consultations with the British Ports Federation.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend is considering the proposals made by the British Ports Federation for extending light dues to pleasure craft, together with the responses to the widespread consultation which was undertaken about them.

Air Pollution

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *228*, at what stage an assessment of changes in levels of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxides and low level ozone will be undertaken.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: If a route is selected for this proposed scheme for further development, an assessment of air pollution will be undertaken during the detailed design stage before publication of the environmental statement.

Cycling

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been done by his Department or commissioned by him to assess the significance of cycling from the perspectives of *(a)* environmental protection, *(b)* health and *(c)* energy efficiency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The cycling research projects undertaken by or on behalf of the Department in recent years have primarily been concerned with establishing means of improving traffic conditions for cyclists, particularly their safety. The three perspectives specified have not so far formed the subject of specific research projects.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those posts in his Department which have a specific remit to promote cycling *(a)* nationally and *(b)* at regional level; and how many of them are currently filled.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department aims to improve conditions for cycling, with emphasis given to making it safer. We do not have any posts with a specific remit to promote cycling, but a substantial number of staff at HQ, in regional offices and at the Transport Research Laboratory undertake cycling work of various kinds.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those areas where regional offices have advised on specific inclusion of safe cycle routes and of those list those which have received funding from his Department; and what percentage these schemes are of the overall spending.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This information is not held centrally, and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secetary of State for Transport what response he has made to the representations of the Cyclists Touring Club.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department has regular contacts with the Cyclists' Touring Club at official level. I would be pleased to agree to a request to meet CTC representatives soon.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce targets to raise the level of cycle use within all local authority areas.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. Levels of demand for cycling, the need for facilities, and the resources, vary considerably across the country. Decisions on appropriate levels of provision for an area should be agreed by the relevant local authorities.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the number of traffic surveys carried out or funded by his Department over each of the last five years and say how many of those recorded cycling.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This information is not available centrally, and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account has been taken of cycling in his Department's contribution to the United Nations Earth summit in Brazil.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Government recognise that cycling is an efficient and environmentally friendly mode of transport. Agenda 21, an action plan to guide the world community towards sustainable development, which will be launched at the conference, recommends that all countries should encourage non-motorised modes of transport by providing safe cycleways and footpaths in urban and suburban centres as appropriate. The Government support this recommendation.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of journeys in the United Kingdom are currently made by bicycle; and if he has comparable figures for the percentage of bicycle journeys in other European countries.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The 1985-86 national travel survey indicates that 2·3 per cent. of all journeys of 1 mile or more are made by cycle. We have no comparable data for other European countries.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what talks he has had with British Rail to require guarantees about reasonable cycle access to rolling stock;

(2) if he will require all new orders for rolling stock to be built to a specification to incorporate cycle accommodation.

Mr. Freeman: The design of rolling stock is a matter for British Rail. BR's policy regarding cycles is to seek to accommodate them whenever possible. However, particularly at peak times on the busier routes, they must balance the interests of cyclists and those of other passengers.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what activity his Department is planning as its participation in national bike week.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I understand there is no particular national focus, or major launch for national bike week which is taking place between 20 and 28 June. The emphasis this year has been placed on local fun rides, races, educational events and demonstrations. There are a number of charity bike rides planned. These include the annual London to Brighton ride on 21 June, which regularly includes riders from the Department of Transport.

Rail Incident, Brierfield

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ask the railway inspectorate to investigate the safety implications of the incident on Monday 18 May in Brierfield in the Pendle constituency involving damage to a train by a coping stone.

Mr. Freeman: This incident arose as a result of vandalism which the British Transport police are investigating. The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate is aware of the action taken by the British Rail's civil engineer following the incident and is satisfied that there is no further risk to either the public or to railway staff.

Emergency Services

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the subsidy paid to British Telecom for emergency frequency watch keeping for the last five years.

Mr. Norris: British Telecom is contracted to provide a distress watch service for the Department of Transport on 500 Khz and 2182 Khz using BT's network of coast radio stations. The annual cost to the Department for the distress watch service over the past five years has been as follows:

Year	*Cost £000*
1987-88	1, 210
1988-89	842
1989-90	916
1990-91	1,395
1991-92	1,237

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the craft, type and purposes of vessels operated by Her Majesty's coastguard.

Mr. Norris: Her Majesty's coastguard operates a fleet of 31 general purpose boats consisting of 20 5·4 m Rider semi-rigid inflatable boats, three 5·1 m Carson semi-rigid inflatable boats, three 4·6 m inflatable boats, three 4·0 m Sea Rider semi-rigid inflatable boats, one 6·0 m Sea Rider semi-rigid inflatable boat, and one 6·0 m Cabin rigid-hulled boat.

Her Majesty's coastguard recently redefined its boat policy to identify two primary functions for coastguard boats—(i) incident prevention by active patrolling in areas considered to be of high risk potential, or areas where land-based patrolling is limited in scope or impossible, for example, river estuaries, and (ii) to transport men and equipment to incidents, for example, on offshore islands.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to invite competition for the emergency listening contract.

Mr. Norris: Only BT has the necessary network of coast radio stations and the equipment to operate such a service. Discussions are presently under way with BT to review the cost of the service and the scope for savings.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many coastguard stations are listening on 2182 kHz.

Mr. Norris: Since 2182 Khz is covered by BT under the distress watch arrangements, there is no obligation for any coastguard station to maintain a continuous listening watch on this frequency, although all coastguard rescue centres have the capability to do so if required. All coastguard rescue centres maintain a continuous listening watch on channel 16, which is the international VHF/FM distress and safety frequency.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will outline his plans for modernising the Decca master and slave chain stations;

(2) if he has any plans to extend Loran C to the whole of the United Kingdom waters.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend's predecessor announced his proposals for the future of radionavigation in United Kingdom waters last summer—*Official Report*, 21 June 1991, column *336*. That announcement reflects the current position in that there is no proposal to establish a Loran C transmitter in the United Kingdom. Since then the general lighthouse authorities have entered into a contract with Racal Decca Marine Navigation Limited for the modernisation and continued operation of the existing United Kingdom Decca chains. I understand that a number of countries may still establish a more limited Loran C system which would give coverage in United Kingdom waters without a United Kingdom transmitter. Developments in this field will be monitored to ensure that the best interests of those who use and pay for marine radionavigation systems are served.

Weather Information

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made with the French authorities on the propagation of Weather Fox information in English.

Mr. Norris: This is a matter for the Meteorological Office agency. I am asking the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Cars, Central London

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the daily car movements in and out of central London by months for 1991 and the corresponding figure for each year since 1980.

Mr. Norris: The available information is given in the table. Counts are made every two years: monthly data are not collected, 1991 figures are not yet available.

Daily car flows in and out of central London

Thousands

	Number
1981	1,078
1983	1,071
1985	1,105
1987	1,086
1989	1,160

Shipping Register

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the main requirements of his inspectors for flagging in, broken down into numbers per year by vessel type.

Mr. Norris: Surveyors from the Department examine all aspects of safety and marine pollution of any ship which intends to flag on to the United Kingdom register.

The major items inspected include lifesaving appliances, fire appliances, navigation equipment, radio equipment, crew accommodation, stability characteristics, marine pollution control and monitoring equipment and manning levels.

The table shows the number of vessels flagged in for the years 1987-88 to 1991-92. All the foregoing items would be inspected on all these ships.

Ships flagging in numbers per year by vessel type

Year	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Passenger[1]	—	—	—	3	3
Tanker	10	3	6	4	2
Cargo ship[1]	10	10	10	12	4
Dry bulk carrier	—	1	6	5	4
Others	13	14	25	15	11

[1] Including roll-on/roll-off.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the average cost of a vessel flagging into the United Kingdom register for each of the last five years expressed as *(a)* per vessel and *(b)* per tonne.

Mr. Norris: The only costs available to the Department are those charged directly to the owners for the attendance of the surveyors. The average costs for these surveyors for the last five years are as follows.

Year	*Average cost per vessel*	*Cost per gross registered ton*
	£	£
1987-88	3,409	0·49
1988-89	2,754	1·16
1989-90	2.386	0·65
1990-91	4,297	1·45
1991-92	4,619	1·50

M1-M62 Link

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *229*, if he will identify those properties, within the Wakefield constituency, which could be demolished as a result of the construction of an M1-M62 motorway link along both proposed routes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I will write to the hon. Member with details of the preliminary information we have on possible property demolition.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* public rights of way and *(b)* bridle ways will be affected by the proposed M1-M62 (i) yellow route and (ii) purple route.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Based on a preliminary survey of rights of way, it has so far been identified that the yellow option would be crossed by two bridleways and 20 footpaths, and the purple route option by three bridleways and 24 footpaths.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column 228, at what stage assessments will be undertaken to determine the extent and implications of farm severance in the development of proposals for an M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: If a route is selected for this proposed scheme for further development, an assessment of farm severance would be undertaken during the detailed design stage before the order for publication.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has available about areas of archaeological importance which may be affected by the proposed M1-M62 link road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Information has been supplied by the West Yorkshire archaeology service from its records. I will write to the hon. Member with details.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *229*, what evaluation has been undertaken into the role of rail, when considering alternatives to the M1-M62 road link; how the balance between forms of transport is to be achieved; what action his Department takes to ensure these aims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No direct evaluation has been undertaken into the role of rail with regard to the M1-M62 scheme, but the scheme would cater for traffic with a wider variety of origins and destinations than could be realistically served by rail. We do not believe that it is our role to tell people where and how they should travel. However, we are supporting a high level of investment in rail as well as roads so that each form of transport can play its part in meeting the needs of travellers. We have also been working with the bus industry and the local authority associations on ways to encourage greater use of buses. And we offer freight facilities grants to encourage the transfer of freight from road to rail or water in appropriate cases.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport using current figures, what would be the assessed *(a)* annual and *(b)* 10-yearly maintenance cost for the purple and yellow routes for the M1-M62 link road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Based on standard unit rates at current prices, the assessed annual maintenance costs of the yellow and purple routes are £160,000 and £190,000 respectively. The 10-year maintenance costs are assessed at £2·59 million and £3·02 million respectively.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessments have been made of vehicular volume on a daily basis along the proposed *(a)* purple and *(b)* yellow routes for the M1-M62 link road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The average traffic flows forecast for the turn of the century on the purple route option are between 43,000 and 76,000 and on the yellow route option between 50,000 and 77,000 vehicles per day, the lower figure in each case being at the eastern end of the scheme and the higher figure being at the western end.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, columns *228-29*, if he will identify the areas of woodland directly affected by the M1-M62 link road proposals and produce details of woodland of ecological interest which could be adversely affected.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have already written to the hon. Member with a list of sites of ecological interest, which included woodlands. All known woodland areas directly affected by the route options is included in the environmental assessment framework. I will send the hon. Member a copy.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 15 May 1992, columns *228-29*, if he will outline the evidence underlying his conclusion that viable alternatives are not available to the proposed M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Most traffic goes by road and will continue to do so and the large majority of passenger journeys are by car. Other forms of transport have an important role to play, but cannot offer the same flexibility. This conclusion is reinforced by a recent study of traffic across the Pennines in the M62 corridor which shows that around half the trips between some city centres are by rail, but only 7 per cent. of total trips.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what extent of hedgerow destruction is envisaged in the construction of the M1-M62 link road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No assessment of the effect on hedgerows has been made. Detailed design of any option would include substantial landscaping and planting proposals.

Bridges

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the steps that are being taken by British Rail to ensure that bridges across the permanent way are maintained in good order.

Mr. Freeman: The Secretary of State meets the chairman of British Rail regularly to discuss various matters, including safety and safety related issues. British Rail's policy is to maintain bridges across the permanent way in good order.

Rail Services, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail about the reliability of late night inter-city trains between London and Liverpool, and with the operators of Merseyrail about the reliability of local services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I am not aware of any major problems with the reliability of late night InterCity services between London and Liverpool.

Merseyrail services are sponsored by Merseyside PTE. They set quality of service targets for local services. It would be for the PTE to take up any question of the reliability of these services with British Rail.

Red Routes

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluation has been done on the effects of the A1 to City red route; and if he will make a statement as to its traffic, environmental and social effect.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Member was sent a copy of the latest evaluation of the 8-mile red route pilot scheme in March. The effects are encouragingly beneficial. The main facts are:

casualties down significantly more in 1991 than on the rest of London's roads;
620 new free short term parking spaces introduced and no permitted parking places removed;
bus lanes almost doubled;
17 new or improved pedestrian crossing points and four new cycle crossings in progress;
bus and general traffic journey times and reliability substantially improved;
1,700 more people a week using the No. 43 bus service which goes along much of the route;
traffic being attracted off less suitable adjacent roads;
no evidence to suggest that red route measures have contributed of themselves to reduced shopping activity.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of red route are planned for London; and on what date he expects to bring forward proposals.

Mr. Norris: I am considering the response received to the consultation document on the proposed red route network and expect to make an announcement shortly. Until that time I cannot say what the mileage of the network will be.

Passenger Boat Regulations Committee

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the composition and objectives of the passenger boat regulations committee.

Mr. Norris: A proposed steering committee for small passenger boats will include three marine directorate district chief surveyors and representatives of the small passenger boat operators' associations. The committee will discuss the effect of future safety legislation on the United Kingdom small passenger boat industry, the problems of implementing current legislation, and general safety matters relating to the small passenger boat industry.

Ports and Airports

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the United Kingdom airports in public and municipal ownership.

Mr. Norris: As at 12 November 1991, the list of active airfields available to civil aircraft, in public and municipal ownership in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, was as follows:

Civil aviation authority owned and operated

Benbecula	Stornoway
Inverness (Dalcross)	Sumburgh
Islay (Port Ellen)	Tiree
Kirkwall	Wick

Northern Ireland office owned

Belfast (Aldergrove)—operated by Northern Ireland Airports Ltd

Municipally owned and operated

Birmingham	Lerwick (Tingwall)
Blackpool	Londonderry (Eglinton)
Bournemouth (Hurn)	Luton
Bristol (Lulsgate)	Manchester (Ringway)
Cardiff-Wales	Newcastle
Carlisle	North Ronaldsay
Coventry	Norwich
Dornoch	Oban (North Connel)
Dundee (Riverside)	Papa Westray
East Midlands	Plockton
Eday	St. Marys (Isles of Scilly)
Exeter	Sanday
Glenforsa (Mull)	Shoreham
Gloucestershire	Southend
Haverfordwest	Southport (Birkdale Sands)
Hoy	Stronsay
Humberside	Swansea
Ipswich	Teesside
Isle of Skye	Westray
Leed Bradford	

Municipally owned and privately operated

Biggin Hill	Plymouth (Roborough)
Doncaster	Rochester
Flotta	Scatsta
Lands End (St. Just)	Unst
Nottingham (Tollerton)	Wycombe Air Park (Booker)

Ministry of Defence airfields available to civil aircraft

Abingdon	Lossiemouth
Benson	Lyneham
Binbrook	Machrihanish
Brize Norton	Manston/Kent
Chalgrove (privately operated)	Middle Wallop
Chivenor	Mona
Church Fenton	Newton
Coltishall	Northolt
Cosford	Odiham
Cranwell	St. Athan
Culdrose	St. Mawgan/Newquay
Dishforth	Shawbury
Elvington	Swanton Morley
Farnborough	Topcliffe
Finningley	Valley
Halton	Waddington
Kemble	Wattisham
Leeming	Wittering
Lee-on-Solent	Woodvale
Leuchars	Yeovilton
Linton-on-Ouse	

Airfields in other public ownership and operation

Alderney—operated by States of Guernsey
Cumbernauld—owned and operated by Cumbernauld Development Corporation
Dounreay—owned and operated by UK Atomic Energy Authority
Duxford—administered by the Imperial War Museum and Cambridgeshire County Council
Fair Isle—owned and operated by the National Trust for Scotland
Fife (Glenrothes)—owned and operated by Glenrothes Development Corporation
Guernsey—owned and operated by States of Guernsey
Isle of Barra—owned by the Department of Agriculture for Scotland and operated by Loganair Ltd.
Isle of Man (Ronaldsway)—owned and operated by Isle of Man Government
Jersey—owned and operated by States of Jersey
North Weald—owned by Epping Forest District Council and jointly operated with Aces High Flying Museum (North Weald) Ltd.

Whalsay—operated by Whalsay Development Committee
Wroughton—operated by the National Museum of Science and Industry
Source: DTp.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the United Kingdom ports in public, municipal and trust port ownership.

Mr. Norris: The Department has no complete lists. Most ports are of only local significance. In the public sector, there are approximately 75 local authority ports, not including some 200 "marine works" which come within the responsibilities of the Scottish Office. The most important of those are Portsmouth, Sunderland, Workington, Ramsgate, Colchester and the oil ports of Sullom Voe and Flotta. There are no other major publicly owned ports. There are about 100 trust ports in Great Britain, of which the most important are Aberdeen, Blyth, Cromarty Firth, Dover, Dundee, Great Yarmouth, Harwich Haven, Ipswich, Lerwick, London, Milford Haven, Montrose, Peterhead, Poole, Shoreham and Tyne. In Northern Ireland the principal trust ports are Belfast, Londonderry, and Warrenpoint.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will calculate the estimated asset value of each airport and sea port in public, municipal or trust port ownership.

Mr. Norris: This information is not available to the Department.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to make annual reports and accounts of trust ports publicly available.

Mr. Norris: We have no plans for this at present.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those trust ports that make their annual accounts available to the general public through their local offices.

Mr. Norris: The Department has no information about this.

Public Transport Investment

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will increase investment in public transport.

Mr. Freeman: BR invested just over £1 billion in 1991-92, the highest figure in real terms for 30 years. In 1992-93 BR is expected to invest a similar amount. London Transport invested around £600 million in 1991-92 and is currently expected to invest over £1 billion in 1992-93, three times greater in real terms than the level of investment five years ago. Bus and light rail investment outside London is primarily the responsibility of the private sector and of local authorities.

Rail System (Vandalism)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will initiate a joint campaign with British Rail to draw to the attention of school children the possible consequences to British Rail staff and passengers of vandalism to trains and track.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail and the Government attach top priority to railway safety. BR's project manager for anti-trespass and vandalism liaises with British Transport police to co-ordinate the efforts of dedicated teams engaged on school visits. Supporting publicity material includes videos and the "Roald Dahl Guide to Rail Safety". More than 4 million copies of this booklet have been sent to schools by BR. The message that children should never play near trains, stations or tracks is strongly endorsed by the Department's "Safety on the Move" campaign.

Fuel Efficiency

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward proposals to set a mandatory fuel efficiency standard for vehicles.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. The United Kingdom is already working with other member states of the European Community with a view to agreeing EC limits on emissions of carbon dioxide from motor vehicles. Bearing in mind the close correlation between CO_2 and fuel consumption, the Government do not consider separate measures to be necessary to deal with fuel efficiency.

Japanese Knotweed

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that sufficient investment is made into British Rail to eradicate the overgrowth of Japanese knotweed along railway embankments.

Mr. Freeman: The management of railway embankments is an operational matter for British Rail. Any programme for eradicating Japanese knotweed would form part of its normal maintenance works, which is funded from revenue income.

VHF Radio

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he is making on direct calling for VHF radios.

Mr. Norris: At present it is not considered that the addition of VHF direct calling would be worthwhile.

Trinity House

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to review progress by Trinity House on automation.

Mr. Norris: Progress on the automation of lighthouses is reviewed annually with Trinity House as part of the yearly review of budgets.

Passenger Vessels (Safety)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the International Maritime Organisation recommendations on passenger vessel stability for through-deck vessels.

Mr. Norris: The United Kingdom expressed dissatisfaction with the recent IMO standards adopted for existing ro-ro passenger ship residual stability and entered a

reservation. We are now pursuing the adoption of higher standards over a reasonable time scale within the European Community.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 15 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *229*, if he will identify areas of land known to be contaminated.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: So far three areas of contaminated land have been identified. These are a tip and old sewage works at Bradley and the Spen Valley refuse tip at Ravensthorpe. A detailed survey covering this aspect would form part of any further design work.

Rail Services (Punctuality)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what form of statistics he holds on the punctuality of British Rail passenger services; what criteria are used when they are compiled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The British Rail passengers charter, which was published in March, committed British Rail to keeping passengers informed of how it performs compared with targets agreed annually with the Government. The charter document, which is widely available, sets out the criteria used to measure British Rail's performance in several areas, including punctuality.

On 11 May, British Rail published the first of its "TrackRecord" reports on reliability and punctuality for each of the 44 passenger route groups its operates. These reports which will be updated every four weeks, can be seen at British Rail stations throughout Britain.

Bus Deregulation, London

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to deregulate buses in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Government remain firmly committed to the deregulation of the London bus market. We believe that deregulation has been a significant success in the rest of the country, producing a 19 per cent. increase in route miles and a one third reduction in operating costs. We want to see these benefits extended to bus users in London, too. We remain convinced that Londoners will benefit from having the key decisions on bus services taken by operators, who are close to the local market and whose survival depends on meeting their customers' needs. We shall be introducing the necessary legislation as soon as possible.

Non-ferrous Waste

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he will take to improve safety standards relating to the transport of non-ferrous waste; and if he will take action to ensure the availability of guideline precautions for handling such waste materials while in transit.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: "Non-ferrous" materials are not a discrete category of waste and there are no special provisions governing their transport. There are however safety regulations for the transport of dangerous goods, including new regulations which have just come into force; regulations for the transport of radio-active materials; and regulations requiring the proper securing of loads on vehicles, which will be reinforced by measures coming into force later this year. We have no present proposals to expand these provisions further.

These regulations are distinct from the registration of carriers provisions introduced under the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989, for which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible. Controlled waste may only be transported by a carrier registered with a waste regulation authority, unless specifically exempted by regulations. The duty of care provisions under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 make it an offence to give waste to a carrier who is not registered or exempt.

London Underground

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the quality of service objectives for London Underground.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the chairman of London Transport on 27 May setting new quality of service objectives. The text of the letter was as follows.

Text of letter from John MacGregor, Secretary of State for Transport, to Wilfrid Newton, Chairman on London Transport, setting new quality of service objectives.

"Cecil Parkinson wrote to you in December 1989 setting quality of service objectives for both London Underground Limited (LUL) and London Transport's bus services covering the period up until 31 March 1992. This letter sets new objectives for London Underground which will run until 31 March 1994. I will be writing to you shortly with new objectives for LT bus services.

"There have been important developments for the Underground since 1989. In June 1991 the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) published their report on LUL. They concluded that more investment was needed in the existing network to bring it up to an acceptably modern standard. In recognition of this, last year's public expenditure rsettlement provided record levels of grant to London Transport, which will allow record levels of investment by LUL. By 1993/94, London Underground will be investing over £700 million per annum in its core business, the level which, in evidence to the MMC, LUL said was necessary to make real progress towards providing an acceptably modern metro.

"A number of important initiatives currently being progressed within LUL should help to ensure that these public resources are used to best effect. In November 1991 London Underground published their Company Plan, an extensive agenda of improvements to the safety, quality and efficiency of passenger services. I welcome this initiative, and will continue to support London Underground through the various stages of its implementation. I also look forward to the publication of LUL's Customer Charter which will set out the Underground's plans to increase its accountability to its customers, and make commitments to continuing improvements to services.

"The objectives which I am setting you today are intended to build on the twin thrusts of better customer awareness and higher quality services. I am setting LUL twelve new objectives, some covering aspects of your services which we have not formally monitored before. There are specific targets in each objective to be achieved by 31 March 1993 and 31 March 1994. I am setting you revised objectives for improvement in service volume and regularity, lift and escalator reliability and the availability of ticket purchasing facilities. I am also looking to you to build on the successes of recent years and achieve a further reduction in the levels of violent crime on the Underground. I am for the first time setting you an objective covering station closures, a major

source of inconvenience to passengers. And, as recommended by the MMC and in line with the Government's Citizen's Charter initiative, I am setting you five targets for improving levels of customer satisfaction—with the cleanliness of your stations and trains, the quality of the information with which you provide your customers, and the helpfulness and availability of your staff. The detailed objectives are set out in the Annex to this letter.

"I believe that these objectives will provide the right challenge for London Underground in its continuing efforts to deliver the high standard of service which today's, and tomorrow's Underground customers expect and deserve. I will be monitoring performance against them regularly, and will be asking you to consider how you can best publish your results, so that passengers can see for themselves what progress is being made."

The text of the new objectives is as follows:

Customer Satisfaction Measures[1]

LUL will improve the quality of passenger information on trains to achieve a customer satisfaction rating of 78 per cent. by 1 April 1993 and 83 per cent. by 1 April 1994. Information on stations will achieve a customer satisfaction rating of 76 per cent. by the same date in 1993 and 81 per cent. by the same date in 1994. The average levels of performance in 1991-92 were 71 per cent. and 68 per cent. respectively. Seventy six per cent. of customers will rate train cleanliness as acceptable or better in 1993 and 81 per cent. in 1994. Eighty five per cent. of customers will rate the cleanliness of stations as acceptable or better in 1993 and 87 per cent. in 1994. These targets compare with average performance levels of 68 per cent. and 82 per cent. respectively in 1991-92.

Staff helpfulness and availability will improve so that 83 per cent. of customers consider it acceptable or better in 1993 and 86 per cent. in 1994. Average performance in 1991-92 was 78 per cent.

[1] The measure used is the percentage of customers rating performance as "acceptable" or better, using data collected during LUL's monthly customer research surveys.

Trains in service in each peak

LUL will improve the percentage of scheduled trains running in the morning and evening peaks from 96·4 per cent. in 1991-92 to 97·5 per cent. by 1 April 1993 and 97·8 per cent. by 1 April 1994.

Train service intervals

LUL will achieve 91 per cent. of planned intervals between trains on frequent services by 31 March 1993. This is a new measure on which little data on current performance currently exists, it is therefore to be reviewed for 1993-94.

Escalator service in each peak

Throughout each peak hour period, for both the morning and the evening peaks, LUL will achieve 87 per cent. escalator availability by 1 April 1993 and 88 per cent. by the same date in 1994. This compares with a current performance in the peaks of 86 per cent.

Lifts in service in each peak

Throughout each peak hour period, both morning and evening, LUL will achieve 85 per cent. availability of lifts by 1 April 1993 and 88 per cent. by the same date in 1994. This compares with a current performance of 85 per cent.

Station closures

In each four week period, the number of station closures of twenty minuters or longer, and which are due to staff absence or equipment failure, will be reduced to fewer than 50 by 1 April 1993 and fewer than 30 by the same date in 1994. This compares with a current average of 100 closures per four week period.

Ticket purchasing facilities

In 1992-93, LUL will maintain the percentage of stations across the network offering at least one form of ticket issuing facility at 99·9 per cent. Before 31 March 1993, a revised target will be set including the condition that change should be available.

Violent crime

The number of violent crimes committed against Underground customers will reduce further in 1992-93.

DEFENCE

Cambodia

14. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what support British forces and military and civilian experts are giving to the United Nations peace-keeping operations in Cambodia.

Mr. Rifkind: As part of the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia, the United Kingdom is providing 38 military observers, 13 mine clearance training experts, including the overall command of the UNTAC mine clearance training unit, and up to seventy naval personnel.

Lockerbie

16. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the involvement of service personnel in the Lockerbie clean-up.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Although the tragedy happened almost three and a half years ago the excellent work done by the services under such distressing and demanding conditions has not been forgotten. In all, more than 8,000 man-days were contributed by the services during the 27 days of the operation, with a peak of more than 700 on the day after the crash, on 22 December 1988. The majority of effort was directed towards the search for bodies and wreckage.

Classified Documents

17. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on documents relating to wartime matters of his Department that remain classified.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Department's policy is to release records after 30 years whenever possible, but a small proportion are withheld for varying periods on grounds such as national security or personal sensitivity.

Merchant Ships

18. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the defence requirements in respect of British merchant ships.

Mr. Aitken: The defence need for merchant shipping is kept under regular review as part of normal planning.

RAF Fylingdales

19. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will arrange to visit RAF Fylingdales; and if he will make a statement on the timetable to make the new station operational.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend currently has no plans to visit RAF Fylingdales. I can confirm that the modernisation programme is on schedule.

Rail Freight

20. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to encourage the use of rail for freight by Ministry of Defence depots.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department uses the most convenient and cost effective methods to transport freight and has no plans to favour the use of rail over any other method of transport.

Bullying and Racial Harassment

21. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to reduce bullying and racial harassment in the armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The services take a very serious view of bullying and racial harassment. It has been made clear throughout the services that bullying, racial harassment or other ill-treatment will not be tolerated. A range of measures to combat bullying has been introduced, including the banning of initiation ceremonies.

Kurdish People

22. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what United Kingdom defence forces are available in Turkey for use in the protection of the Kurds.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom contribution to the coalition deterrent force in south-east Turkey comprises eight Jaguar reconnaissance/ground attack and two tanker aircraft plus ground support. In addition, the United Kingdom has a representative on the Coalition Military Co-ordination Committee.

Commonwealth of Independent States

23. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate the range of contact between his officials and military representatives of the Commonwealth of Independent States; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The MOD is steadily increasing its contacts including: meetings between United Kingdom and Russian nuclear experts and officials; co-operation programmes agreed under the auspicies of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council; and the recent seminar on democratic management of defence, held at the Royal United Services Institute in London on 18 and 19 May.

Surface Vessels

24. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will next be placing orders with United Kingdom shipyards for the construction of surface vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We plan further orders of type 23 frigates, single role minehunters, amphibious ships and support ships, but no decisions have been taken on their size and timing.

Dartmoor National Park

26. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the reasons of confidentiality which prevent him from disclosing the amount paid by his Department to the Duchy of Cornwall for the use of moorland and farming land on the Dartmoor national park for live firing.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Our normal practice is not to disclose the amount payable for individual contracts between the Department and third parties on grounds of commercial confidentiality.

C130 Transport Aircraft

27. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts about the replacement of the C130 transport aircraft.

Mr. Aitken: Whilst my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has discussed with NATO partners the wider matter of strategic mobility, the specific issue of replacing C130 transport aircraft has not been raised.

Trident

25. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Aitken: The Trident programme is on time and within budget and continues to make satisfactory progress towards its in-service date of the mid-1990s.

28. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the PSA on the progress of the Trident construction project at the Clyde submarine base.

Mr. Aitken: Ministers maintain a close oversight over all aspects of the Trident programme, including construction at the Clyde submarine base, on which we are regularly briefed by MOD's project managers, PSA projects. I am having further correspondence and discussions with the PSA about matters raised by the hon. Member for Dumbarton in the House on 21 May, *Official Report*, column 471.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment of future global deployments of anti-ballistic missile systems; and what are the implications for the level at which Trident is deployed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Currently, only Russia possesses operational anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs). The United States has outlined its proposals for ABM defences which will be discussed with NATO allies. Other countries have expressed an interest in gaining an anti-tactical ballistic missile (ATBM) capability against sub-strategic ballistic missiles. Trident will deploy the minimum number of warheads necessary to provide effective deterrence.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what studies his Department has undertaken to examine whether Trident could perform a sub-strategic nuclear role;

(2) if Trident will be capable of performing a sub-strategic nuclear role.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 20 May, *Official Report*, column *187*.

Housing

29. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to improve housing opportunities for ex-service personnel and their families.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) announced on 24 February 1992 a package of improvements on housing opportunities for armed forces personnel leaving the services. My Department is also taking steps, in the short-term, to provide assistance to those being made redundant, or who are not being re-engaged and who find themselves in housing difficulty.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many unoccupied Ministry of Defence units of accommodation there are in the city of Plymouth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 31 March 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, 467 of the 2,858 service married quarters in the Plymouth area were vacant. Of these, 82 were undergoing modernisation, 61 were allocated to incoming service families and eight were in the process of being sold on the open market. There are plans for 170 dwellings to be sold to a housing association and a further 40 married quarters form part of the Ministry of Defence contribution to the Plymouth urban development corporation package. In addition, seven of the 12 civilian properties in the Plymouth area were vacant.

Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is his intention to continue the armed forces parliamentary scheme in the current Parliament.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

HMS Swiftsure

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether HMS Swiftsure is to receive a second refit.

Mr. Aitken: No. Swiftsure is not required to sustain our plan for a long-term force level of around 12 nuclear-powered submarines, and she was consequently paid off in April this year.

Redevelopments

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by how much the estimated final costs of recent redevelopments at *(a)* Ballykelly Shackleton barracks, *(b)* Plymouth Citadel and *(c)* Hollywood have risen from original estimates; and why.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Weapon Transporters

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in providing armoured nuclear weapon transporters and containers to Russia: at what cost; under what vote and subhead the expenditure falls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on 9 March 1992.

Specifications for the vehicles and containers have been discussed with Russian officials, and proposals for procurement are being prepared. It is our intention to deliver the equipment at the earliest possible date.

Northern Ireland

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what effect the deployment of additional infantry battalions to Northern Ireland in January and February 1992 has had on his previous estimate of the extent to which the minimum emergency tour length target interval of 24 months will be met in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The additional infantry battalions were deployed for only nine weeks and seven weeks respectively. Such short-term deployments are not included in the calculation of emergency tour plot intervals and do not affect the previous estimate for 1993-94.

Trafalgar Submarines

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress in defining the characteristics of followon Trafalgar class submarines.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) on 22 May. The design studies into a batch 2 Trafalgar class submarine are progressing satisfactorily and we expect to begin consideration of the results early next year.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *258*, for how many batch 2 Trafalgar class hunter killer submarines he intends to invite tenders for design and construction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: No decision has yet been made regarding the number of batch 2 Trafalgar class submarines required.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *258*, whether he intends to restrict tenders for the design and construction of batch 2 Trafalgar submarines to VSEL; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We procure defence equipment through competition wherever practicable. In this case we would expect to invite tenders from any company willing and able to compete for the prime contractorship of the design and construction stage.

Submarine Training

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many submarine service trainees are currently awaiting part III training berths in submarines; how many have been waiting for over six months; and what steps he proposes to take to reduce the backlog.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Of the 359 ratings currently undergoing part III training, 100 are currently awaiting billets at sea; 12 have been waiting for a sea billet for more than six months. Measures that have been taken to improve this situation are:

(a) Additional time within the submarine programme has been allocated to part III training;
(b) Part III training is now also carried out in submarines in harbour;
(c) Part III training is now co-ordinated centrally and is given a higher priority in all submarines' programmes.

Bloodhound Missiles

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress on the replacement of Bloodhound missiles.

Mr. Aitken: Consideration is being given to procurement of future medium surface-to-air missile system although this will not be a direct replacement for Bloodhound.

Iserlohn Military Hospital

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent since 1986-87 to date on the extension and improvements to British military hospital Iserlohn; what was the original estimated cost in real terms; when the hospital will be closed; and what steps he is taking to recover the value of the improvements made.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The expenditure to date on the major works services at BMH Iserlohn is £45·935 million against an original estimate of £34·635 million. On current plans the unit will cease functioning as a hospital on 31 March 1994 and the buildings will be handed over to the German authorities in November 1994.

Discussions are taking place with the German authorities concerning the future use of the property. The outcome of these discussions will decide whether there is a basis for a claim.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Aitken: The earliest year for which figures are available is 1982-83. Figures for the period 1982-83 to 1991-92 are as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	5·1
1983-84	6·3
1984-85	6·8
1985-86	6·7
1986-87	7·3
1987-88	7·0
1988-89	7·1
1989-90	8·0
1990-91	8·4
1991-92	9·1

The estimated expenditure figure for 1992-93 is £9·5 million. The figures provided include staff costs and expenditure on films, exhibitions, publications and equipment.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Aitken: Fees paid to management consultants engaged centrally by the Ministry of Defence for the years 1984-85 to 1991-92 are as follows:

Financial year	*£ million*
1984-85	0·604
1985-86	1·787
1986-87	6·203
1987-88	5·140
1988-89	3·109
1989-90	5·292
1990-91	3·935
1991-92	5·700

Figures for earlier years cannot be produced without disproportionate cost and effort.

Under the Department's devolved management strategy, expenditure on management consultancy is now the responsibility of individual management areas. Plans are therefore not held centrally for 1992-93, but provisional forecasts indicate expenditure of about £6·8 million.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Aitken: The opinion poll surveys conducted by, for, or on behalf of the Ministry of Defence since 1 November 1991 are as follows:

Service and subject
MOD—National Employers Liaison Committee Research Monitor
Navy—Exhibition Response Research
Army—Advertising Evaluation and Development
Black Strategy Development
Signal New Recruits
Creative Development
MORI Finalists Survey
Officers Strategic Research

The purpose of these surveys was to monitor the effectiveness of advertising and attitudes towards careers in the armed forces.

Dunera

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to publish the documents relating to the voyage of the Dunera.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have found no extant Ministry of Defence records relating to the voyage of the Dunera. The courts martial records of the British service men who were charged with offences against the passengers of that vessel were destroyed some years ago as they did not meet the criteria for permanent preservation. The Home Office has a small number of records concerning the Dunera. All are open to public examination, in class HO 215, at the Public Records Office. They include file No. 215/1, containing the Dunera passenger lists, which until very recently was closed.

Radiation Exposure

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a breakdown for *(a)* Rosyth dockyard, *(b)* Devonport dockyard, *(c)* Coulport RNAD, *(d)* HMS Defiance and *(e)* Clyde submarine base of individual radiation dose exposures for workers in the bands (i) 0 to 10, (ii) 10 to 15, (iii) 15 to 20, (iv) 20 to 30, (v) 30 to 40 and (vi) greater than 40 mSv for the years 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Aitken: Information on radiation doses in 1992 is not yet available. The tables provide information on doses for 1991 at the locations specified. It is possible to split the band 0-15 mSv only for those workers covered by the assessments of approved dosemeters issued by the Defence Radiological Protection Service (DRPS). At Rosyth and Devonport dockyards many personnel are protected by separate local dosimetry arrangements.

Table A—Annual individual radiation dose equivalents for all personnel at Rosyth dockyard—1991

	Figures
0-15 mSv	1,182
15-20 mSv	0
20-30 mSv	0
30-40 mSv	0
More than 40 mSv	0

Of the 1,182 workers who received doses of 0-15 mSv, 430 can be identified as being in the band 0-10 mSv and 22 in the band 10-15 mSv.

Table B—Annual individual radiation dose equivalents for all personnel at Devonport dockyard—1991

	Figures
0-15 mSv	1,340
15-20 mSv	0
20-30 mSv	0
30-40 mSv	0
More than 40 mSv	0

Of the 1,340 workers who received doses of 0-15 mSv, 655 can be identified as being in the band 0-10 mSv.

Table C—Annual individual radiation dose equivalents for all personnel at RNAD Coulport—1991

	Figures
0-10 mSv	236
10-15 mSv	0
15-20 mSv	0
20-30 mSv	0
30-40 mSv	0
More than 40 mSv	0

Table D—Annual individual radiation dose equivalents for all personnel at HMS Defiance—1991

	Figures
0-10 mSv	296
10-15 mSv	0
15-20 mSv	0
20-30 mSv	0
30-40 mSv	0
More than 40 mSv	0

Table E—Annual individual radiation dose equivalents for all personnel at Clyde Submarine Base—1991

	Figures
0-10 mSv	299
10-16 mSv	26
15-20 mSv	3
20-30 mSv	1
30-40 mSv	0
More than 40 mSv	0

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a breakdown for *(a)* Aldermaston AWE, *(b)* Burghfield AWE and *(c)* Cardiff AWE of individual radiation dose exposures for workers in the bands (i) 0 to 10, (ii) 10 to 15, (iii) 15 to 20, (iv) 20 to 30, (v) 30 to 40 and (vi) greater than 40 mSv for the years 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Aitken: The individual annual radiation dose data for AWE Aldermaston (A), Burghfield (B) and Cardiff (C) for the years 1990 and 1991 are as follows:

Numbers of workers in dose bands

	AWE (A)	*(B)*	*(C)*
1990			
0-10 mSv	3,388	182	136
10-15 mSv	4	0	0
15-20 mSv	0	0	0
20-30 mSv	0	0	0
30-40 mSv	0	0	0
Over 40 mSv	0	0	0
1991			
0-10 mSv	3,383	203	155
10-15 mSv	4	0	0
15-20 mSv	0	0	0
20-30 mSv	0	0	0
30-40 mSv	0	0	0
Over 40 mSv	0	0	0

Annual dose data for the year 1992 are not yet available.

RNAD Trecwn

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what part his Department is playing in the study into the feasibility of establishing a munitions decommissioning centre at RNAD Trecwn.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department is investigating the possibility of alternative Ministry of Defence and other Government Department uses for the RNAD Trecwn site but our requirement for munitions disposal is small and would be best met by a storage site for which there is a continuing additional need. I am not aware of the existence of a feasibility study.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the current study by the National Radiological Protection Board in relation to veterans of British nuclear tests to be completed; if he intends to publish this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) on 22 May 1992, column *290*.

IFF Technology

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Warrior vehicles hit by friendly fire from two American A-10 jets were fitted with IFF—identification friend-or-foe technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. During the Gulf conflict, a secure and effective electronic identification system did not exist. The board of inquiry into this tragic incident recommended that a study be initiated to identify a suitable air recognition system for future use. In pursuit of that recommendation, the Defence Research Agency is undertaking a research programme aimed at assessing short-term solutions as well as options for the longer term.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for updating and improving current IFF—identification friend-or-foe technology.

Mr. Aitken: The Government remain concerned about the inadequacies of existing IFF systems. We are currently engaged, in co-operation with France and Germany, in a programme of studies into the required characteristics of a next generation IFF system for aircraft. Close consultation is being maintained with Italy and with the United States Government, who have been reviewing their own future requirements following the cancellation of its IFF Mk XV programme in 1991. Firm decisions on the way ahead are not expected before 1993.

Separately, the Government are carrying out studies into possible methods of improving the identification of ground forces (battlefield IFF).

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for defence what percentage of the total work force in his Department is registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: There are currently 1,164 registered disabled people employed in the MOD. This represents 0·9 per cent. of the total workforce. In addition, there are a number of staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register formally as disabled. The MOD takes very seriously its responsibilities as an equal opportunities employer, and has compiled a programme of action for people with disabilities, which is to be launched shortly.

RAF Brawdy

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a breakdown of the £2 million saving per year he estimates will be made to the defence budget when flying training ends at RAF Brawdy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is continuing to look for alternative uses for RAF Brawdy within his Department when flying training ends there.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Investigations have so far revealed no alternative defence uses for RAF Brawdy.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what grade of official has represented his Department at meetings of the task force on the effects of the closures of RAF Brawdy and RNAD Trecwn;

(2) what is the grade of the civil servant representing the MOD on the Secretary of State for Wales's Task Force for Pembrokeshire set up in connection with the ending of flight training at RAF Brawdy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: MOD representation has been at grade 7 (principal) level, with the exception of one meeting at which, because of other commitments, representation was by an executive officer.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the position on the consumption of alcohol on royal naval nuclear submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the current ports allocated to Z-berths for nuclear submarines; and if he has any plans to alter the list in the future.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Within the United Kingdom there are Z-berths, including buoys and anchorages, at the following locations:

Barrow-in-Furness, Barry, Broadford Bay, Brodick Bay, Campbeltown, Cardiff, Coulport, Dales Voe, Dalgety Bay, Devonport and Plymouth Sound, Faslane, the Firth of Forth, Glen Mallan, Holy Loch, Lamlash Bay, Lerwick, Liverpool, Loch Ewe, Loch Fyne, Loch Goil, Loch na Beiste, Loch Striven, Loch Torridon, Portland, Portree, Portsmouth, Raasay, Rosyth, Rothesay, Southampton, Spithead, Thurso Bay and Torbay.

In addition, we have decided to establish a Z-berth at Swansea. The operational requirements for Z-berths are under continuous review but there are no current plans to alter this list.

Defence Review

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implementation of the defence review.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have been restructuring our forces to ensure that, though smaller, they will be more flexible, more mobile and better-equipped than ever before. We will continue to keep the House fully informed of progress in implementing plans for Britain's defence for the 1990s.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the amount of chemical weaponry held by former Soviet Union countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The former Soviet chemical warfare stockpile, which the Russian authorities say is now held entirely within their territory, is the largest and most sophisticated in the world. We estimate that the stockpile is greater than the 50,000 tonnes of agent that the Soviet authorities claimed it to be. The chemical weapons convention in Geneva continues to make progress towards a global ban on these weapons.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Aitken: Government Departments, and their executive agencies, are required to pay their bills promptly. In such matters the MOD does not differentiate between large, medium or small business suppliers and normally expects to pay its bills within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice as required by the contract.

To help encourage prompt payment of bills by Government contractors to their subcontractors all my Department's contracts will contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay its subcontractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that

type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the subcontractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—a Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Mr. Aitken: "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. However, in the light of my hon. Friend's question, I will make sure that the appropriate senior officials in my Department receive a copy. I can assure my hon. Friend that my Department has a good record on the prompt payment of its due bills to all contractors, including small businesses.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many nuclear free-fall bombs have been withdrawn from service to date;

(2) how many nuclear free-fall bombs are currently deployed by the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to specify publicly the size of our nuclear weapon holdings. The hon. Member will recall however that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) announced on 14 October 1991, *Official Report*, column 58, that we should be making a substantial reduction in the numbers of our WE177 bombs in coming years. The process of withdrawing WE177 weapons from service in accordance with that announcement is under way.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for how long the United Kingdom's strategic nuclear deterrent will be maintained by a combined force of Trident and Polaris submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Trident will enter service progressively from the mid-1990s. It is not our practice to disclose details of operational deployments and decommissioning programmes.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what plans his Department has to alter the level of warhead deployment for the United Kingdom's minimum strategic nuclear deterrent before the end of the century;

(2) if the criteria determining the level at which the United Kingdom's strategic nuclear deterrent is deployed will be different for Trident compared with Polaris.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It will remain the Government's policy to deploy the minimum number of warheads necessary to ensure credible and effective deterrence.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the implications for the continued credibility of the United Kingdom's strategic nuclear deterrent of the deployment of existing anti-ballistic missile systems around the world;

(2) what is his Department's assessment of the security implications for the United Kingdom's strategic nuclear deterrent of the acquisition by Russia of anti-ballistic missile technology and know-how from other states.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We remain satisfied with the continuing credibility and effectiveness of our strategic nuclear deterrent. The possibility of future developments in anti-ballistic missile defence, however, confirms that wisdom of replacing Polaris with Trident.

RAF Training

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many persons have been killed during RAF training over rural mid-Wales each year since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Aircraft type*	*Number of fatalities*	*Location*
June 1987	Jaguar	1	Near Builth Wells, Powys
August 1987	Phantom	2	8 nm south of Aberystwyth
June 1989	Hawk/Hawk Mid-Air	1	Near Aberystwyth
August 1991	Jaguar/Civilian Cessna	2[1]	Carno, Powys

[1]Including civilian pilot of Cessna.

The RAF attaches the highest priority to flight safety in all its training activities.

Biological Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment of the number of countries currently involved in the development of biological weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is assessed that about ten countries possess or seek to acquire a biological warfare capability. It is difficult to gauge exactly the number of countries that are involved because biological weapons can be developed and produced at civilian facilities.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested, in respect of centrally controlled expenditure, is as follows:

	(a) Television advertising	(b) Radio advertising	(c) Newspaper advertising	(d) Other promotional material	Total
1979-80	2·28	0·04	5·75	0·14	8·21
1980-81	0·54	0·17	6·10	0·85	7·66
1981-82	0·01	0·04	4·20	1·04	5·29
1982-83	0·01	0·07	3·90	1·03	5·01
1983-84	Nil	0·07	5·30	1·90	7·27
1984-85	0·49	0·02	6·86	1·50	8·87
1985-86	1·82	0·02	6·82	1·03	9·69
1986-87	0·73	0·22	8·07	1·17	10·19
1987-88	0·55	0·03	7·68	2·52	10·78
1988-89	2·86	0·18	9·56	4·44	17·04
1989-90	4·18	0·26	13·36	6·21	24·01
1990-91	2·88	0·22	9·21	8·62	20·93
1991-92	3·28	0·26	7·93	7·37	18·84
1992-93	2·15	0·01	7·20	1·88	11·24

Note: All figures are expressed in £ million.

Nuclear Testing

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will upport a comprehensive test ban treaty to end underground nuclear testing.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 12 May 1992 at col. 90.

Newtown Firing Range

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to upgrade the Newtown firing range to electronic target range standards.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Channel Islands

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the defence installation facilities paid for by the Channel Islands states Governments as their contribution to the cost of their defence by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Iraq

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any request for the use of British forces for mine clearance in liberated areas of Iraq has been made.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There have been no requests from the Iraqi authorities for the assistance of British forces in clearing mines inside Iraq.

NATO Rapid Reaction Corps

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to seek alternative Army training grounds in eastern Europe for military manouevres for the NATO rapid reaction corps under British command.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently no plans for either ARRC units or British Forces to use training areas in eastern Europe.

HMS Turbulent

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when the report into the fire on-board HMS Turbulent on 30 April is complete, if he will make that report available to the public;

(2) when he expects the investigation into the fire on board HMS Turbulent on 30 April to be completed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The report on the causes of the fire on-board HMS Turbulent has been completed. It is not our practice to release internal reports of this nature but I can confirm that the fire was due to a material defect in a switchboard which has now been rectified.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 3 June 1992

TRANSPORT

Severn Bridge

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the tolls on the Severn bridge from its opening till the present; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information is as follows:

	Motor cycles	*Cars*	*Small goods/ buses*	*Large goods/ buses*
September 1966	1s.0d	2s.6d	2s.6d	2s.6d
February 1971	5p	12½p	12½p	12½p
March 1973	5p	12p	12p	12p
August 1979	10p	20p	20p	40p
June 1983	—	50p	50p	£1·00
December 1985[1]	—	20p	20p	40p
January 1987[2]	—	50p	50p	£1·00
December 1989	—	£1·00	£1·00	£2·00
April 1992	—	[3]£2·80	[3]£5·60	[3]£8·40

[1] Reduced to 1979 levels following High Court judgement.
[2] Reinstated toll levels following House of Lords ruling.
[3] One-way toll (westbound)—eastbound is free.

These toll charges reflect the cost of providing and maintaining the Severn bridge. The increases in April 1992 will additionally help to meet the cost of providing a second crossing, which is due to open in 1996.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Norris: My Department regularly commissions surveys. A list of all surveys is maintained, but it is not possible to identify easily from this list those surveys which include questions of opinion. The answer on 5 November 1991 to the hon. Member referred to 69 surveys of all types reported to the Department's survey control unit in 1991. A further 47 have been reported since and I am sending a list of these to the hon. Member.

Consultants Fees

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Norris: The latest figures for fees paid by the Department to management consultants are as follows:

	£
1984-85	250,000
1985-86	272,000
1986-87	218,000
1987-88	371,000
1988-89	604,000
1989-90	734,000
1990-91	814,592
1991-92	[1]1,228,066
1992-93	[2]1,373,005

[1] Latest estimate.
[2] Budget.

This excludes fees for computing consultancies.

Information for earlier years could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Greater Manchester Relief Road

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when it is intended that the draft orders for the M6 to M56 section of the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road be issued.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This summer.

M6, Corley Moor

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive a formal application from British Coal for an extra junction on the M6 near Corley Moor to the west of the Corley service station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It would be for Warwickshire county council as highway authority for local roads to decide to request the Department to include in its programme an extra junction on the M6 near Corley Moor.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects the public consultation to take place in respect of *(a)* the M56 to A580 and *(b)* the A580 to M66 sections of the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I expect public consultation on the M56 to M62 section of the Greater Manchester northern relief road to start later this year. I cannot yet give a date for consultation on the section between the M62 and M66.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many private and public sector properties are currently vacant in the city of Liverpool; what incentives he will provide to Liverpool city council to introduce homesteading schemes; what penalties he will impose on private and public sector landlords who fail to let properties; what is the estimated annual rent and community charge lost on empty private and public sector properties *(a)* throughout the United Kingdom and *(b)* in Liverpool; if he will meet leaders of Liverpool city council to discuss a plan of action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: At 1 April 1991, the number of vacant properties in Liverpool was 5,733 local authority, 843 housing association and 7,908 privately owned.

As far as local authority stock is concerned, the housing subsidy rules penalise those councils that have more than 2 per cent. of their stock empty and reward those that do better. To further encourage best use of housing resources the Department will be introducing a pilot scheme to promote homesteading of local authority stock, linked with the estate action programme. For private homes, we do not believe that property owners should be forced to let accommodation against their will, but our policies are geared to creating the conditions to encourage landlords to let their properties.

Combined Heat and Power

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *221*, by the Minister for Energy, what proposals he has for encouragement of combined heat and power schemes in the renewables sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Energy Efficiency Office—EEO—through its best practice programme, continues to promote the wider application of combined heat and power—CHP—schemes in all appropriate sectors of the United Kingdom economy regardless of the fuel used.

Where a CHP plant uses a fuel such as waste it may also benefit from the Government's programme to promote the development of renewable energy sources. This programme is run by the Department of Trade and Industry, which works in close collaboration with the EEO on CHP schemes using alternative fuels.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is his intention that local authorities should have a veto on applications for opencast mining.

Mr. Baldry: No. It is for the mineral planning authority as the elected representatives of the local community in the first instance to decide in any particular case whether planning permission should be granted having regard to all the material considerations, including the potential impact of the development on the environment and local residents. However, it is a fundamental of the land use planning system that the applicant has the right of appeal to the Secretary of State against a mineral planning authority's refusal of an application.

Environment Programme

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the environmental action programme 1993-2000 launched by Commissioner Ripa di Meana on 18 March.

Mr. Maclean: The Government played a full part in discussions leading to the adoption, at the Environment Council on 26 May, of preliminary conclusions concerning the environmental action programme "Towards Sustainability". The Council welcomed the presentation by the European Commission of the programme and undertook to ensure that the programme will be discussed so that it can become operative by 1 January 1993 following the adoption of a resolution by the Council. Preparation of the resolution will fall to the United Kingdom presidency of the Council.

The Government have set out their initial views on the programme in an explanatory memorandum which will be presented to the Select Committee on European Legislation when the Committee is reconstituted. Copies of the explanatory memorandum have been placed in the Library of the House.

Planning Controls

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action is being taken following the recommendation by the House of Commons Environment Committee concerning the harmonisation of planning control above and below low watermark;

(2) if he will consider extending local authority planning control to the 12-nautical mile limit of territorial waters.

Mr. Baldry: In its second report of last Session, the Environment Select Committee made several recommendations on the issue of harmonising landward planning control and seaward regulations as far as the 12-nautical mile limit of territorial waters. We are considering the report and will respond in due course.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the Contaminated Land Registry with particular reference to its timing, its implications on planning and liabilities on owners of land on the register.

Mr. Maclean: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 14 May, at column *198*.

Environment Council

Mr. Mark Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council on 26 May.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside and I represented the United Kingdom at the Environment Council on 26 May.

The Council approved a new directive on air pollution by ozone. The directive requires the monitoring of atmospheric concentrations of ozone throughout the Community on a consistent basis; the sharing of selected monitoring information between member states and the Commission; and the issuing of information and of precautionary health warnings to the public in the event of ozone concentrations exceeding specific thresholds. It also requires the Commission, four years after entry into force of the directive, to put a report to the Council on the monitoring data collected by member states, with proposals on the control of air pollition by ozone.

The Council adopted conclusions on the framework convention on climate change and agreed that the convention constituted a significant first step in tackling this global problem. They urged all countries to sign the convention during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and to ratify it as soon as possible, and agreed that the Community should also sign it. The Council also supported the continuation of the

climate change negotiations to begin in autumn 1992 and stressed the readiness of the Community to contribute actively to this work.

The Commission gave a brief presentation on the state of their preparations to present to the Council proposals for a strategy for the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, which would include proposals for a carbon/energy tax.

In advance of UNCED, the Council adopted preliminary conclusions welcoming the presentation by the Commission of the fifth environmental action programme, entitled "Towards Sustainability". It noted the contents of the programme and undertook to accord the highest priority to consideration of the programme in the light of UNCED and the opinions of the European Parliament and the economic and social committee, so that, following the adoption of a resolution by the Council, the programme can become operative by 1 January 1993.

The Council discussed informally the state of preparations for UNCED.

The Council discussed at length a draft Council regulation on the supervision and control of shipments of waste within, into and out of the European Community. The regulation is intended to update existing Community legislation on the control of transboundary movements of waste and to enable member states to ratify the United Nations Environment Programme convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal. Much progress was made towards the achievement of a common position, but owing to continuing differences of view on the question of national self-sufficiency in the disposal of waste, the Council was unable to reach agreement on this occasion.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Mark Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue guidance to the local government commission and announce its work programme.

Mr. Howard: I have today issued to the local authority associations and other organisations with an interest the policy guidance I intend to issue to the new local government commission. It takes account of the comments we received on the draft guidance issued last November. I have also today issued draft procedure guidance for the local government commission. Copies of both documents have been placed in the Library of the House and additional copies are available in the Vote Office.

I intend to direct the local government commission to undertake a rolling programme of reviews of the shire counties of England, area by area. Review will be carried out in five tranches. The areas to be covered in each tranche are:

First
Avon
Gloucestershire
Somerset
Cleveland
Durham
Derbyshire
Humberside
Lincolnshire
North Yorkshire
Isle of Wight

Second
Cambridgeshire
Cumbria
Lancashire
Devon
Hampshire
Leicestershire
Nottinghamshire
Staffordshire

Third
Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Oxfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Cheshire
East Sussex
West Sussex
Kent
Northamptonshire

Fourth
Dorset
Essex
Hereford and Worcester
Norfolk
Suffolk
Wiltshire

Fifth
Cornwall
Hertfordshire
Northumberland
Shropshire
Surrey
Warwickshire

This represents a balanced and manageable programme for the commission and gives priority to those areas where there is a history of dissatisfaction with the existing local government structure. I expect structural changes following the commission's reviews to take effect between 1994 and 1998.

Contingencies Fund

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to draw advances from the Contingencies Fund in 1992-93.

Mr. Howard: Yes. In February my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced that the Government would be providing £55 million of Government support towards Manchester's bid to host the 2000 Olympic games. Most of this funding will be used to provide sports facilities, but £2 million is to be used to help the Manchester Olympics bid committee fund the bid itself. Funding of the work on the bid will form a new service and parliamentary approval to it will be sought in a summer supplementary estimate for the urban aid and derelict land reclamation vote—class VIII, vote 3. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £900,000 will be met by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

In addition, I shall be taking a further advance from the Contingencies Fund to meet the immediate administration and project development costs of the Birmingham Heartlands urban development corporation. Parliament approved the statutory order establishing this corporation on 10 March 1992 and Parliament's approval of the associated new expenditure will be sought in a supplementary estimate also for the urban aid and derelict land reclamation vote—class VIII, vote 3. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £300,000 will be met by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

Building Regulations

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has made any changes to the Building Regulations 1991, or the guidance in the associated draft approved documents, which came into force on 1 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Building Regulations 1991 were laid before Parliament on 10 December 1991 and, subject to certain transitional provisions, came into force on 1 June 1992.

The main technical changes brought about by the regulations relate to regulation 7 (materials and workmanship), part A (structure), part B (fire safety), part C (site preparation and resistance to moisture), part E (resistance to the passage of sound), part G (hygiene), part K (stairs, ramps and guards) and part M (access and facilities for disabled people) and a new part N (glazing —materials and protection).

In conjunction with the coming into effect of the new regulations, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has approved, for the purpose of giving practical guidance on ways of meeting the amended technical requirements of the regulations, the "approved documents" which were also published in December. To bring the statutory guidance fully up to date, HMSO has published an amendments document—"The Building Regulations 1991: Amendments 1992"—which contains corrections, clarifications and revisions to both the new approved documents and those existing editions which will remain approved for the purposes of the 1991 regulations —parts 3 (toxic substances), F (ventilation), H (drainage and waste disposal), J (heat producing applications) and L (conservation of fuel and power). A copy of the amendments document will be placed in the Library of the House.

The new statutory guidance on the requirements for means of escape in case of fire—approved document B (fire safety)—will now have the practical effect of requiring that smoke detectors are fitted in all new and converted dwellings. As a result of this change, the provisions of the Smoke Detectors Act 1991 are unnecessary, and we have therefore decided, on the advice of the Building Regulations Advisory Committee, not to bring that Act into force.

The Building Regulations (Amendment) Regulations, which were laid before Parliament on 28 May, make a minor preocedural amendment to regulation 13 of the Building Regulations 1991, which is necessary to remove an unnecessary administrative burden on builders and developers that was inadvertently introduced in those regulations. The amendment ensures that extra copies of fire safety plans are not required to be deposited where the work relates to a dwelling-house or flat, and comes into effect on 26 June 1992.

The Department has issued a joint circular with the Welsh Office—DOE circular 13/92, Welsh Office circular 29/92—to all building control authorities in England and Wales, and approved inspectors, giving general guidance on the main procedural changes which will arise on the coming into effect of the new regulations, and other administrative matters arising as a consequence. The circular also contains details of all the approved documents. A copy of the circular has been placed in the Library of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to ensure that all lists of candidates for public appointments contain equal numbers of men and women.

The Prime Minister: All appointments to public bodies are made on the basis of aptitude and merit. It is Government policy for all shortlists prepared for Ministers' consideration to include the names of women or for good reasons to be given for the absence of such names.

Commercial Whaling

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he will take to ensure that there is a permanent ban on all commercial whaling in United Kingdom and EC waters.

The Prime Minister: Whaling within United Kingdom fishery limits is already banned and the sale and purchase of whale products by EC member states are prohibited through the Community implementation of the convention on international trade in endangered species.

Ministerial Committee on the Environment

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister how often the ministerial committee on the environment has met since 10 April; when the next meeting is planned; what will be on the agenda of the next meeting; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) on 2 June, at column *394*.

Security Files

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now make it his policy to disclose how many files on *(a)* individuals and *(b)* organisations are kept by (i) the Security Service and (ii) the Secret Intelligence Service; what is his policy on the destruction of files held by these services; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the conclusions of the Security Service Commissioner who said in his report for 1991 that he found the Security Service's general policy on retention of records acceptable.

Nuclear Safeguards

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister which Government Department will be responsible for overseeing the application of nuclear safeguards and the transmission of safeguards data to the Euratom and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards directorates on United Kingdom facilities following the closure of the Department of Energy.

The Prime Minister: The Department of Trade and Industry.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to raise the issue of nuclear warhead testing and the prospects for a global halt during his next meeting with President Bush.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 12 May, at column *90*.

Bohemian Wood Carvings

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his discussions in Prague with President Havel, in relation to the theft of Bohemian ecclesiastical wood carvings, and their subsequent sale in the West.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* I raised this issue with a senior colleague of President Havel. I have instructed our ambassador to follow up that discussion in greater detail.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give separate figures for the spending by the Cabinet Office on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The information requested is not available for the years before 1987-88. For the years from 1987-88 the information is as follows:

Year	*Television* £	*Radio* £	*Newspaper* £	*Other* £
1987-88	Nil	Nil	Nil	19,306
1988-89	Nil	Nil	Nil	9,500
1989-90	Nil	Nil	Nil	14,833
1990-91	Nil	Nil	Nil	876
[1]1991-92	Nil	Nil	Nil	10,478
[1]1992-93	Nil	Nil	Nil	1,000

[1] Estimated figures.

In addition, there was estimated expenditure in 1991-92 on advertising associated with the citizens charter of £811,911 on newspaper advertising and £202,134 on other advertising. Similar expenditure in 1992-93 is provisionally estimated at £165,000 on television advertising, £495,000 on newspaper advertising and £621,000 on other advertising.

HOME DEPARTMENT

United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations he has received regarding funding and staffing of UKIAS; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he proposes to make additional financial resources available to UKIAS.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 18 May 1992 at column *10*.

Replica Firearms

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent advice he has received from the Firearms Consultative Committee concerning replica firearms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Firearms Consultative Committee advised the then Home Secretary that neither a ban nor licensing controls on replica firearms would be either feasible or effective. The committee recommended extending the range of offences which apply to the misuse of replicas. This recommendation is under consideration with the prosecuting authorities and the police service. The committee also recommended that warning labels about the heavy penalties which apply to misuse should be incorporated on the packaging of imitation firearms. Consultations have been held with the trade whose views are being carefully considered.

Dispersal Prisons

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review his policy of reducing the number of dispersal prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My predecessor announced in 1989 that the number of disperal prisons would be reduced from eight to six. There are at present no plans to vary this number.

Police Incidents

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing the number of incidents recorded *(a)* per uniformed officer and *(b)* per head of population in each police authority area in Britain over the last five years including 1991-92 and an index of the increase in each area with year one as the base.

Mr. Jack: The available information relates to the number of offences recorded by the police per officer and per 100,000 population for the years 1987 to 1991 and is contained in the tables.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police per 100,000 population

	Offences per 100,000 population					*Offences per 100,000 population, index 1987 = 100*				
Police force area	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Avon and Somerset	7,225	6,996	7,087	8,987	10,582	100	97	98	124	146
Bedfordshire	7,814	7,505	7,704	10,110	10,667	100	96	99	129	137
Cambridgeshire	5,368	5,279	5,668	6,803	8,753	100	98	106	127	163
Cheshire	5,428	5,152	5,016	5,786	6,913	100	95	92	107	127
Cleveland	10,803	10,546	10,984	13,363	14,137	100	98	102	124	131
Cumbria	5,889	5,597	5,762	6,782	9,162	100	95	98	115	156
Derbyshire	5,096	4,703	5,284	6,501	8,106	100	92	104	128	159
Devon and Cornwall	5,148	4,994	5,196	6,167	7,224	100	97	101	120	140
Dorset	6,058	5,534	6,077	7,294	7,831	100	91	100	120	129
Durham	7,509	7,413	7,723	9,114	10,881	100	99	103	121	145

Police force area	Offences per 100,000 population					Offences per 100,000 population, index 1987 = 100				
	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Essex	5,228	4,975	5,299	6,552	7,399	100	95	101	125	142
Gloucestershire	6,574	6,513	6,671	8,007	10,535	100	99	101	122	160
Greater Manchester	12,362	11,386	11,414	13,112	14,700	100	92	92	106	119
Hampshire	6,031	5,619	5,942	7,178	8,582	100	93	99	119	142
Hertfordshire	5,094	4,836	4,975	5,513	6,594	100	95	98	108	129
Humberside	10,438	10,054	10,742	12,201	13,831	100	96	103	117	133
Kent	5,239	5,223	5,501	6,780	9,075	100	100	105	129	173
Lancashire	6,816	6,986	6,507	7,785	8,778	100	102	95	114	129
Leicestershire	5,817	5,712	6,185	8,160	9,999	100	98	106	140	172
Lincolnshire	6,122	5,642	6,102	6,677	7,587	100	92	100	109	124
London, City of	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Merseyside	11,346	9,882	9,381	9,614	10,309	100	87	83	85	91
Metropolitan Police	10,173	9,942	10,503	11,551	12,757	100	98	103	114	125
Norfolk	5,712	5,698	5,995	7,298	8,541	100	100	105	128	150
Northamptonshire	7,201	6,749	6,837	8,353	10,079	100	94	95	116	140
Northumbria	11,977	11,190	12,684	14,236	15,798	100	93	106	119	132
North Yorkshire	5,358	4,915	5,017	6,403	7,086	100	92	94	120	132
Nottinghamshire	9,733	9,591	10,484	13,122	14,810	100	99	108	135	152
South Yorkshire	7,348	6,892	7,305	8,286	9,687	100	94	99	113	132
Staffordshire	5,658	5,514	5,748	6,979	8,291	100	97	102	123	147
Suffolk	5,036	4,746	5,016	5,888	6,201	100	94	100	117	123
Surrey	4,390	4,331	4,542	5,724	6,704	100	99	103	130	153
Sussex	4,838	4,813	5,330	6,700	7,918	100	99	110	138	164
Thames Valley	6,131	5,631	6,180	7,551	9,437	100	92	101	123	154
Warwickshire	5,245	4,773	5,234	6,811	8,386	100	91	100	130	160
West Mercia	5,029	4,714	4,903	5,386	6,861	100	94	97	107	136
West Midlands	10,136	9,014	8,749	10,123	11,584	100	89	86	100	114
West Yorkshire	8,964	8,567	9,178	11,420	14,273	100	96	102	127	159
Wiltshire	5,038	4,854	4,978	6,013	6,998	100	96	99	119	139
Dyfed-Powys	4,133	4,321	3,817	4,427	5,508	100	105	92	107	133
Gwent	6,132	5,513	5,672	7,084	8,642	100	90	92	116	141
North Wales	5,900	5,525	5,370	5,805	6,804	100	94	91	98	115
South Wales	8,630	9,017	9,079	10,649	12,368	100	104	105	123	143

[1] Not applicable.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police per police officer

Police force area	Offences per police officer					Offences per police officer, index 1987 = 100				
	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Avon and Somerset	32	31	31	40	48	100	97	97	125	150
Bedfordshire	39	37	38	48	51	100	95	97	123	131
Cambridgeshire	28	28	30	36	45	100	100	107	129	161
Cheshire	26	24	23	27	32	100	92	88	104	123
Cleveland	38	37	38	47	49	100	97	100	124	129
Cumbria	23	22	23	26	35	100	96	100	113	152
Derbyshire	24	22	25	32	41	100	92	104	133	171
Devon and Cornwall	25	25	26	31	37	100	100	104	124	148
Dorset	30	28	30	36	39	100	93	100	120	130
Durham	30	29	30	36	43	100	97	100	120	143
Essex	26	25	26	32	36	100	96	100	123	138
Gloucestershire	28	28	29	35	46	100	100	104	125	164
Greater Manchester	41	39	38	44	50	100	95	93	107	122
Hampshire	30	28	30	36	43	100	93	100	120	143
Hertfordshire	25	24	24	27	32	100	96	96	108	128
Humberside	43	41	43	50	57	100	95	100	116	133
Kent	25	25	26	32	43	100	100	104	128	172
Lancashire	25	26	24	29	33	100	104	96	116	132
Leicestershire	28	28	30	40	48	100	100	107	143	171
Lincolnshire	28	26	28	31	36	100	93	100	111	129
London, City of	9	8	9	9	9	100	89	100	100	100
Merseyside	33	29	27	27	31	100	88	82	82	94
Metropolitan Police	26	25	26	29	31	100	96	100	112	119
Norfolk	30	30	32	38	44	100	100	107	127	147

Police force area	Offences per police officer					Offences per police officer, index 1987 = 100				
	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Northamptonshire	36	33	34	41	49	100	92	94	114	136
Northumbria	47	43	48	53	59	100	91	102	113	126
North Yorkshire	25	24	24	32	35	100	96	96	128	140
Nottinghamshire	40	39	43	54	61	100	98	108	135	152
South Yorkshire	31	28	30	34	39	100	90	97	110	126
Staffordshire	25	25	26	32	38	100	100	104	128	152
Suffolk	25	24	26	30	32	100	96	104	120	128
Surrey	19	19	20	25	29	100	100	105	132	153
Sussex	22	22	25	31	37	100	100	114	141	168
Thames Valley	32	29	32	39	49	100	91	100	122	153
Warwickshire	25	23	25	31	39	100	92	100	124	156
West Mercia	24	23	24	29	35	100	96	100	121	146
West Midlands	38	33	32	37	42	100	87	84	97	111
West Yorkshire	33	31	34	42	55	100	94	103	127	167
Wiltshire	23	22	23	27	31	100	96	100	117	135
Dyfed-Powys	18	19	17	20	25	100	106	94	111	139
Gwent	26	23	23	29	36	100	88	88	112	138
North Wales	27	25	25	27	31	100	93	93	100	115
South Wales	33	35	35	42	49	100	106	106	127	148

Firearms Certificates

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many firearms and shotgun certificates have been issued on Merseyside in each of the years 1986 to 1991; and what information he has about the numbers of firearms and shotguns stolen in the county during the same period.

Mr. Jack: The number of applications for new firearm and shotgun certificates granted and the number of certificates renewed by the Merseyside police force in each year from 1986 to 1990, are shown in tables 2 and 4 of Home Office statistical bulletin Nos. 2/88, 33/88, 18/89, 26/90 and 23/91. Copies of these bulletins are in the Library.

The total number of offences of burglary and theft recorded by Merseyside police force in which one or more firearms were reported as stolen and the number of these in which the principal weapon stolen was a shotgun is shown in the table for each year between 1986 and 1990.

Burglaries and thefts reported by the police in which firearms were reported to have been stolen

Merseyside police force area — *Number of offences*[1]

Year	Total	Number where shotgun the principal weapon
1986	104	13
1987	103	10
1988	71	7
1989	64	11
1990	59	7

[1]More than one firearm may have been stolen in each offence.

Figures for 1991 are not yet available.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the desirability of amending the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929 and the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 in the light of the recent acquittal in the case involving the death of a 36-week unborn child.

Mr. Jack: I understand that the acquittal referred to by the hon. Member concerned a charge of manslaughter, of which a person may be convicted if it can be proved that the victim was born alive and subsequently died as the result of injuries received whilst in the womb. Neither the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, which makes it an offence intentionally to destroy the life of an unborn child capable of being born alive, nor the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990, which disapplied the 1929 Act from abortions carried out in accordance with the conditions of the Abortion Act 1967, is therefore directly relevant to this case.

Criminal Appeals

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases were referred to the Court of Appeal criminal division on a point of law under section 17(1) of the Criminal Appeals Act 1968 by his predecessors in each year since 1981.

Mr. Jack: Two: one in 1990 and one in 1992.

Visas

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the requirement for visas for Polish nationals who visit the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since the beginning of last year, about 160 representations have been received from right hon. and hon. Members and about 75 letters from members of the public.

After a further review of the need for a visa requirement for Polish nationals, the Prime Minister decided to lift it with effect from 1 July.

The position will be reviewed after two years in the light of experience of the effects of this change.

Bail Hostels

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many bail hostels in England and Wales have been sited in villages.

Mr. Jack: There are currently 28 bail and 81 probation/bail hostels in England and Wales. Of these, three bail and 12 probation/bail hostels are located in smaller communities outside urban areas.

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will set out the statutory procedures, step by step, which are required prior to a decision for siting a bail hostel being made.

Mr. Jack: Hostels are established under powers given by section 49 of the Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973. The procedure is for the relevant area probation or voluntary management committee to decide upon the exact location of a hostel and to obtain the necessary planning consent locally.

Apart from obtaining planning permission from the relevant planning authority, there are no statutory procedures laid down for the siting of bail hostels.

The Home Office is now producing guidance on developing new hostels which will include matters concerning local consultation when a particular site is being considered. In future probation and voluntary committees will have to follow this guidance.

John Kamara

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the case of John Kamara, details of whom have been sent to him by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside.

Mr. Jack: Representations about Mr. Kamara's case have been considered in the light of inquiries made, but we have concluded that the information currently available does not provide sufficient grounds to justify any intervention in this conviction.

I have written to the hon. Member in more detail about the case.

Offensive Weapons

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to amend the criminal law relating to the possession or use of offensive weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has no plans to amend the law in this area.

Section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 makes it an offence in England and Wales to possess in public a bladed or sharply pointed article with the onus on the carrier to show that he has good reason. This measure supplemented the Prevention of Crime Act 1953 which makes it an offence for a person to have an offensive weapon in a public place without reasonable excuse or lawful authority.

The courts have available and use severe penalties to deal with offenders whose crimes involve the use of offensive weapons. The Criminal Justice Act 1991 will enhance the power of the courts to protect the public from serious harm from a violent offender.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Irish Whiskey

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the revenues which have accrued to the Exchequer through domestic sales of Irish whiskey in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The only available information is in respect of VAT and excise duty accruing from domestic sales of all whisky produced in the United Kingdom for which I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 20 May 1992, at column *181*.

Gender Impact Statements

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to include a gender impact statement as an integral part of future Budget and Financial Statements.

Mr. Dorrell: No.

Banks

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will encourage British banks to compete within the EC.

Mr. Nelson: The United Kingdom has been in the forefront of those arguing in Brussels for measures that will create a single market in banking in the EC. The second banking directive, together with a series of directives harmonising prudential rules across the EC, will come into force in January 1993. This will result in the removal of barriers to cross-border expansion and improved competitive opportunities for British banks wishing to do business throughout the Community.

Money Laundering

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps have been taken to implement the EC money laundering directive.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury has issued a consultation paper on the implementation of this directive. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

European Single Market

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the method of calculating and presenting Britain's balance of payments figures will be altered after the establishment of the European single market in January 1993.

Mr. Nelson: Yes. The changes stem from the abolition of most Customs controls on intra-Community trade. Customs declarations, the current source of the statistics of visible trade, will no longer be available. Instead, a new system of monthly returns, linked to VAT returns, has been devised. Known as Intrastat, it is governed by Council regulation (EEC) No. 3330/91 of 7 November 1991. Further details have been deposited in the House of Commons Library.

The presentation of the monthly visible trade statistics will be affected. There will be a transitional period before the new system becomes fully established, affecting all member states to a greater or lesser extent depending on the speed and accuracy with which traders supply data. In United Kingdom, complete visible trade figures and, hence, the current account balance for the early months of 1993 are unlikely to be published before the middle of the year, although extra-EC trade statistics will continue to be made available in line with the current timetable. Announcements on the timing and format of the publications will be made nearer the time.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he expects in the role and duties of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise after the establishment of a European single market in January 1993.

Sir John Cope: With the creation of the single market, fiscal frontiers between member states will disappear. As from 1 January 1993, there will be no routine or systematic customs formalities and goods will move freely across internal EC frontiers. The collection of VAT, excise duty and statistics on intra-EC trade at the frontier will be replaced by arrangements based on the provision of periodic returns by companies controlled at their own premises and linked to the domestic VAT and excise systems. As a result there will be a major shift of resource and effort from frontier to inland locations.

There will be no restrictions on tax and duty-paid goods purchased for personal use in the single market. The use of the red and green channels will also cease. Although duty-free allowances will continue for the time being, control will be exercised on the vendor rather than passengers at the point of entry into the United Kingdom.

Customs currently operate a wide range of controls at the frontier which are carried out on behalf of other Government Departments, for example health checks on intra-EC traffic in animals and plants. The single market will mean that routine regulatory controls of this kind at internal EC borders will cease. The restrictions that remain will be controlled inland, with any documentary checks divorced from the physical movement of the goods.

However, anti-smuggling spot checks will continue particularly to combat illicit drug trafficking in respect of traffic from inside as well as outside the EC after 1 January 1993. Customs are creating a more flexible, mobile, better targeted and highly selective system of checks for this purpose, operating on the basis of risk assessment, intelligence and profiling which will result in far less obtrusive controls. Customs activity at the frontier will continue to form part of a national integrated law enforcement effort against illicit goods.

European Co-operative Statute

Mr. Michael: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what documents, in addition to the formal draft statute, he will base his formal consultation exercise in regard to the draft European co-operative statute; and if he will place copies of all such documents and any circulars on the topic in the Library.

Mr. Nelson: The combined consultative document will be based on all three draft "social economy" statutes, along with the accompanying employee participation directives. In drafting this consultative document, due notice will be taken of the consultation exercise carried out by the DTI in January 1992, in respect of the European company statute, on which many of the provisions of the "social economy" statutes are based. Copies of the draft statutes and directives are already in the Library and a copy of the consultative document will be placed there in due course.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Bank of England will respond to the second report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee of Session 1991-92, "Banking Supervision and BCCI: The Role of Local Authorities and Money Brokers".

Mr. Nelson: I understand that the Bank of England has now responded to the second report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee in Session 1991-92, "Banking Supervision and BCCI: The Role of Local Authorities and Money Brokers". A copy of this response has been placed in the Library, together with the revised edition of the London code of conduct for principals and broking firms in the wholesale markets, which was issued by the bank on 29 May.

Rouble

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what conditionality has been applied over the funding of a stabilisation fund for the Russian rouble; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the communiqués issued by the G7 and G10 on 26 and 27 April 1992 respectively, which are being placed in the Library of the House.

At meetings in Washington on 26 and 27 April, the G7 and G10 supported the intention to establish a rouble stabilisation fund provided appropriate conditions were met. The fund, which would operate in conjunction with a comprehensive IMF programme, would be intended to help stabilise the rouble, facilitate convertibility of the currency, and promote confidence in the Russian reform effort.

The exact conditions that will need to be satisfied before funding is made available for a stabilisation fund will be determined by the IMF and G10 in consultation with the Russian authorities. These conditions will include the implementation of an agreed IMF programme. It is clear that a stabilisation fund would be effective only once a significant tightening of monetary policies had taken place, an appropriate exchange rate regime had, in the opinion of the IMF, been established, and an effective agreement had been reached on the management of monetary policy across the rouble area.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the extent the individual policies of economic management pursued by each of the CIS republics will be able to influence the success of a rouble stabilisation fund for Russia.

Mr. Nelson: A rouble stabilisation fund could be successful only once effective agreements had been reached on the management of monetary policy across the rouble area. Before a rouble stabilisation fund is put in place the

IMF will need to satisfy itself that appropriately tight monetary policies are being followed in Russia and all other states which use the rouble.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if moneys being allocated for a rouble stabilisation fund, if drawn on, will be subject to repayment by any of those countries that comprise the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Mr. Nelson: G10 Finance Ministers, meeting in Washington on 27 April, agreed that a rouble stabilisation fund could be financed by the IMF which would provide Russia with enhanced access to its resources, which in turn would be replenished through lending to the IMF by participating countries under the general arrangements to borrow—GAB. Such a stabilisation fund would be put in place only if Russia agreed a programme with the IMF. National contributions to the IMF under the GAB would be matched by the acquisition of claims on the IMF. All funds made available by the IMF to Russia, either through an IMF standby arrangement or a rouble stabilisation fund, would be fully repaid in accordance with criteria established by the IMF.

Commonwealth of Independent States

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the nature of the G7 package of support for the Commonwealth of Independent States as a whole and each of its constituent republics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the communiqués issued by the G7 and G10 on 26 and 27 April 1992 respectively, which are being placed in the Library of the House.

The G7 has expressed its commitment to support Russia's reform effort during the difficult period of transition by providing the recently announced $24 billion multilateral financial assistance package within the context of an agreed IMF programme. To this end, the G7 is prepared to provide up to $18 billion through substantial bilateral assistance, together with other countries, and through supporting significant financial resources from the international financial institutions. In addition, the G10 has supported the intention to establish a $6 billion rouble stabilisation fund.

No similar package has been announced for the other states of the former Soviet Union.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The expenditure by Her Majesty's Treasury—excluding the BT share offer—on advertising and other promotional material is as follows.

The expenditure for 1988-89 was £49,310, that for 1989-90 was £52,486, that for 1990-91 £43,581 and that for 1991-92 was £104,602—none of which was on television or radio. The estimate for 1992-93 is £72,500. Comparable figures for earlier years are unavailable because of machinery of government changes and could only be given at disproportionate cost.

BT share offer advertising costs were £20,000,000 for 1991-92.

Consultants' Fees

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The expenditure by Her Majesty's Treasury, excluding the BT share offer, on fees for management consultants is as follows:

The expenditure for 1990-91 was £2,715,831, that for 1991-92 was £3,203,727 and estimate for 1992-93 is £3,697,304. For figures for earlier years I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 1 May 1991, at column *209*.

The cost of advisers for the BT share offer was given in the answer of 5 March, at column *244*.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The following public opinion surveys have been carried out on behalf of the Treasury since 1 November:

January—February NOP Share Ownership Survey.

The following surveys were also carried out on behalf of the Treasury but in relation to the BT share offer:

Market research into public awareness of the BT Share Offer.

Share information office registrants Survey.

Capital Adequacy Directive

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress was made at ECOFIN on 19 May with discussions on the draft capital adequacy directive; and when he expects the directive next to be discussed and a common position to be reached.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the report by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the ECOFIN on 19 May, at columns *279-82*. The next meeting of the ECOFIN takes place on 9 June when the CAD is likely to be discussed further.

HEALTH

Tattoo Removal

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost to public funds for a tattoo to be removed.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The cost will vary according to such factors as the size and type of tattoo to be removed.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many tattoos have been removed under the national health service for each of the most recent years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will issue advice to tattooists on the advice to give potential customers about the ease with which tattoos can be removed.

Mr. Sackville: The decision to have a tattoo is a matter for individual freedom of choice. We would expect that tattooists inform customers of the ease of removal as part of normal good practice. The Department has issued model byelaws which enable local authorities to satisfy themselves that any premises offering skin piercing procedures are safe.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each health authority in England and Wales the number of patients waiting for operations; and of those how many are waiting for the removal of tattoos.

Mr. Sackville: Provisional figures for the number of patients waiting in England at 31 March 1992, are given in the table. Waiting time information on those waiting for tattoo removal, as with other specific conditions, is not collected centrally. Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Patients waiting at 31 March 1992[1]
In-patients and day cases

	Number
Northern	57,285
Yorkshire	69,634
Trent	85,514
East Anglia	41,055
North West Thames	55,727
North East Thames	78,158
South East Thames	76,261
South West Thames	46,361
Wessex	56,375
Oxford	46,201
South Western	65,692
West Midlands	90,002
Mersey	50,081
North Western	83,795
SHAs	13,456
ENGLAND	915,607

[1]Based on provisional figures from regional health authorities.

Rabies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of state for Health what information she has about the number of emergency vaccinations for suspected rabies in each country of the EC in 1991; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The latest figures available for Europe are for 1988 and contained in the World Health Organisation's "World Survey of Rabies 24", a copy of which is in the Library. Figures for England and Wales for 1990 show that 598 people received emergency courses of rabies vaccine.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Marginal Tax Rates

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate how many people will face marginal tax rates above 50 per cent. as a result of the introduction of the council tax; and if he will break this down into those with families and children and those without.

Mr. Burt: It is not possible to provide estimates of marginal deduction rates for 1993-94 as council tax levels have yet to be set. However, an estimated 395,000 heads of benefit units working more than 24 hours a week and receiving income-related benefits, would face marginal deduction rates of above 50 per cent. had the council tax replaced the community charge in 1991-92. Of this total, 325,000 would head families with children.

Source: Modelled using data drawn from the 1987 and 1988 Family Expenditure Surveys at 1991-92 prices and benefit levels: estimates not comparable with those published in the Departmental Report (Cm 1914), which are based on Family Expenditure Surveys for 1986, 1987 and 1988.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Television Sets

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of *(a)* imports and *(b)* exports of television sets in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: In 1991, United Kingdom exports of television sets amounted to £685·4 million, compared with imports of £245·1 million.

Beer and Cider

Mr. Wallace: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received regarding the proposed implementation of section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985 in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The President of the Board of Trade has received only three letters about section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985, none of which relate specifically to Scotland. The Government have considered these representations and have concluded that the section should be brought into force on 1 April 1994 in accordance with the terms of the order made on 5 March.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Harris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has received a report from the Securities and Investments Board on the exercise of its functions under the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A copy of the board's report, made in accordance with s117 of the Act, was laid before Parliament today. The report covers the period from 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991. Copies are available in the Library.

Markham Gas Field

Mr. Lidington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what stage negotiations have reached with the Netherlands Government on the transboundary Markham gas field.

Mr. Eggar: I am pleased to be able to inform the House that negotiation of a treaty with the Netherlands Government covering the exploitation of the Markham gas field has been concluded and that the treaty was signed in The Hague on 26 May by the British ambassador to the Netherlands Sir Michael Jenkins KCMG and by the Netherlands Minister of Economic Affairs Dr. J. E. Andriessen. The treaty, which is the United Kingdom's fourth transboundary field treaty although the first with the Netherlands, will enable the field to be developed as an integrated unit. It provides for co-operation between the two Governments on matters like safety, inspection, measurement, appointment of a single operator, approval of the field's development plan, abandonment, exchange of information and for the determination and apportionment of reserves. The treaty will in due course be laid before the House. In the meantime I will place a copy of the treaty in the Library of the House.

Director General of Fair Trading

Mr. Spring: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to publish the report by the Director General of Fair Trading for the year 1990.

Mr. Leigh: The 18th annual report by the Director General of Fair Trading has been published today. It covers the period from 1 January 1991 to 31 December 1991. Copies of the report have been laid before Parliament.

South Africa

Mr. Hayes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will report on how British companies have complied with the European Community code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa during the 12-month period to 30 June 1991.

Mr. Heseltine: By 28 February 1992, a total of 101 companies had submitted reports to the DTI under the code of conduct. Copies of the reports and of the Department's analysis and summary have, as in previous years, been placed in the Library of each House. These documents may also be inspected at the Department's export market information centre, at the British embassy in Pretoria, at the British consulate-general in Johannesburg, and at the British consulates in Cape Town and Durban.

The analysis and summary is the sixth since the adoption of the revised code of conduct by EC Foreign Ministers in November 1985. Reports were received from all British companies, except two, whose interests are known or believed to warrant a full report under the code. The two companies not reporting were reminded of the existence of the code, and of the importance the Government attach to it.

The reporting period under review has seen a decrease in the number of black employees of British subsidiaries being paid below the code's recommended minimum level. Companies' reports indicated that over 98 per cent. of employees were paid above this level.

Companies' reports indicated that the level of their involvement with trades unions representing black workers increased, with the majority of companies reporting formal involvement with the trades unions. Many companies have taken steps to alleviate the particular hardships experienced by their migrant workers.

As in previous years, all companies provide on-the-job training and many provided additional training facilities. Companies continued to report impressive levels of involvement in projects benefiting not only their employees and their families but also the wider communities from which their work forces were drawn. Companies also continued to encourage the growth of black business.

The period covered by the report has been a time of rapid political change in South Africa. But, these encouraging developments have taken place against a backdrop of economic recession. Unemployment has continued to increase. This illustrates the pressing need to restore growth to the South African economy, so that all sides there may show their supporters that peaceful reform brings concrete benefits.

The Government are once more grateful to companies for their continued co-operation in providing reports, and urges them to maintain this performance and to comply fully with the code.

Energy Council

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on issues discussed and decisions taken at the European Energy Council meeting on 21 May.

Mr. Eggar: I attended the Council.

The main item on the agenda was the Commission's proposal, in continuation of its internal energy market programme, for two directives on the liberalisation of the electricity and gas markets. Those measures have the full support of the United Kingdom, which regards the completion of the internal energy market as a high priority. Some other member states do not support the Commission's proposals. No conclusionis were agreed following the Council discussion and the draft directives will go forward for further negotiation.

The Council adopted the directive on hot water boilers and reached a common position on the proposal for a directive on energy consumption labelling of domestic appliances, both of which come under the SAVE initiative on energy efficiency. The Commission outlined a proposal for a further SAVE directive, which would require member states to take action on building certification, heat metering, third party financing, buildings insulation, inspection of heating equipment, inspection of vehicles, and energy audits. The Commission related that proposal and other programmes, THERMIE and ALTENER, to stabilisation of CO_2 emissions and announced its intention to propose a CO_2/energy tax soon.

A mandate for the Commisson to open negotiations for Community accession to the IEA was deferred pending detailed examination of the proposed directive on oil crisis measures. The Commission presented a communication on oil markets and the refining industry and also a proposal for a directive on the conditions for granting and exercising authorisation for the exploration and production of hydrocarbons.

Competition and Service (Utilities) Act 1992

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to implement the Competition and Service (Utilities) Act 1992.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am pleased to announce that I made a commencement order on 29 May which will bring into force the substantive sections of the Act. Section 37 was brought into force on 30 May. This is an enabling power for the Secretary of State to reduce—by order—the gas monopoly threshold.

On 1 July, the sections of the Act will come into force to provide the utility regulators with statutory powers to set and monitor standards for the utility companies, and to facilitate greater competition in the provision of water and sewerage services. Changes to the water mergers regime will ensure that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission can take into account the number of companies in separate ownership in their consideration of all mergers of water enterprises referred to them.

At the same time, there will come into force the sections granting the Secretary of State powers to make orders designating the telecommunication operators to which the Act will apply, and to make regulations to enable the Director General of Telecommunications to resolve telecoms billing disputes.

The sections of the Act giving the utility regulators power to resolve disputes between customers and the utilities will come into force on 1 September. The regulators will use the period before then to set up the necessary procedures.

Copies of the order have been placed in the Library of the House.

Director General of Telecommunications

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the successor to Sir Bryan Carsberg as Director General of Telecommunications.

Mr. Heseltine: I have appointed Mr. W. R. B. Wigglesworth as acting Director General of Telecommunications at the Office of Telecommunications with effect from 13 June 1992. The general election made it necessary to make an interim appointment. It has not proved possible to complete the process of appointing a long-term successor to Sir Bryan Carsberg before he moves to the Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Wigglesworth has done an excellent job as deputy director and has carried out the duties of director in Sir Bryan's absences. I have complete confidence that he will carry out those responsibilities equally effectively until a long-term successor is found. Work on that is well in hand.

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* Government Departments, including their executive agencies, are required to pay their bills promptly. The timing of payment should normally be stipulated in Government contracts. Where there is no contractual provision or other understanding, Departments should pay within 30 days of receipt of goods/services or the presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment, whichever is the later.

To help encourage prompt payment of bills by Government contractors to their sub-contractors, all Government contracts are to contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay its sub-contractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the sub-contractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

Labelling and Packaging

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if his Department has been invited to participate in *(a)* the conference on the practical implications of the New European Commission eco-labelling scheme, to be held in London on 18 June and *(b)* the conference on packaging and the environment and the implications for the British Retail Consortium, to be held in London on 15 June.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* My Department is in contact with the organisers of these conferences. Speakers at the conferences will include experts who have been advising and assisting my Department on the development of the EC eco-labelling scheme. Dr. Elizabeth Nelson, the recently appointed chairman of the non-departmental public body which is being established by my Department and the Department of the Environment to administer the eco-labelling scheme in the United Kingdom will address the conference on 18 June. A member of the National Advisory Group on Eco-labelling—NAGEL—will also address the Conference. Participants in the British Retail Consortium conference on 15 June will include a member of NAGEL and an official of the Department of the Environment.

Life Cycle Analysis

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if Ministers or officials have been invited to participate in or contribute to the conference on the use of life cycle analysis as a cost-effective management tool, to be held in London on 16 June.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* A deputy director of my Department's environment unit will attend the conference and give a presentation on the use of life-cycle analysis within the EC eco-labelling scheme.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ban the import of spent nuclear fuel into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* No.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Cost Limits

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the 1992-93 running cost limit for the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland departments.

Mr. Mates: The running cost limit for 1992-93 for the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland departments is £712·3 million. Details of the provision for individual Northern Ireland departments are set out in the Northern Ireland estimates which were laid before the House on 2 June.

EDUCATION

Religious Advisers

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will list the names and religious denomination of those outside his Department who advise him on religious matters on an occasional or standing basis; and whether he intends appointing any additional special advisers.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no such religious advisers, but he greatly values his contacts with religious leaders whom he and his ministerial colleagues see from time to time.

Student Support

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information the Government will provide about support for students for the coming year.

Mr. Forman: We have today published the 1992-93 edition of our guide "Student Grants and Loans". Secondary schools and colleges in England and Wales will receive copies; so will higher education institutions throughout the United Kingdom. Further copies are available on request. We have also placed copies in the Libraries of both Houses.

This guide contains good news for students. It shows the effect of the 4·5 per cent. increase in average resources that we are providing this autumn. Full year support from grant and loan will then be nearly 40 per cent. higher than the grant in 1989-90.

The guide gives students the facts about grants and loans in plain English. The citizens charter says that public services should publish simple and accurate information. Record numbers of students are entering higher education. They need to know what financial support they can get and how to apply for it. I am delighted that the guide bears the crystal mark of the Plain English Campaign.

Voluntary-Aided Schools

Mr. Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to accept applications for voluntary-aided status from Muslim schools on the same criteria as applications from Anglican, Catholic and Jewish schools.

Mr. Forth: It has always been my right hon. Friend's policy to consider each proposal for voluntary-aided status, put forward by any persons or voluntary body of any religious persuasion, on its individual merits.

Lip Reading

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to ensure that lip-reading classes are available as a right to all who need them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Education Act 1981 places the responsibility for making appropriate educational provision for children with special educational needs on each local education authority. It is not for the Government to prescribe which form of communication should be employed in schools where there are pupils with hearing impairments, nor the level of support they require. Such decisions are best made in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Higher Education

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has on the number of students in full-time higher education who have not completed their course of studies in each of the past five years and the reasons, in so far as these are known, for their withdrawal from their courses.

Mr. Forman: Details of non-completion of higher education courses can be found in: (a) "University Management Statistics and Performance Indicators in the UK" and (b) "Leaving rates among First Year Students in English Polytechnics and Colleges", a Department for Education statistical bulletin to be published in June.

Publication (a) is in the Library; publication (b) will be placed in the Library when available and a copy will be sent to the hon. Member.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what amount of borrowing approval per pupil he has provided to grant-maintained schools in each local education authority area for 1992-93; and what amounts of borrowing approval per pupil he has given to each local education authority to provide for the schools remaining within their remit.

Mr. Forth: Grant-maintained—GM—schools are prohibited from borrowing under section 57(4) of the Education Act 1988. GM schools receive capital grant direct from the Secretary of State. It is not possible to give a figure representing the average capital allocation per pupil for each LEA because the pupil numbers rise during the course of the year as more schools become incorporated.

Information on allocations per pupil for LEA-maintained schools is not immediately available in the form requested. I shall write to the hon. Member with this information when it is.

DEFENCE

Royal Navy (Redundancies)

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether a second phase of redundancies is planned for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I announced on 21 November 1991, *Official Report*, column *305-6*, a total reduction of

8,000 in Royal Navy numbers planned by 1995. In the initial phase of the exercise in 1992-93, 80 officers and 320 ratings were selected. I can now say that, in the second phase, approximately 450 officers and 700 ratings will be made redundant.

It is intended that personnel will be selected from categories in surplus, bearing in mind the need to maintain a balance of skills and experience. So far as possible the target will be achieved by voluntary means, but some compulsory redundancies cannot be ruled out if the correct seniority spread within the ranks and specialisations is to be achieved.

Detailed terms will be promulgated to the Navy and applications will be invited, to take effect between April and November 1993.

Gulf Conflict

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his oral answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, columns 147-48, what information he has about the use of air recognition systems by United States ground forces during the recent conflict in the Gulf;

(2) what consideration was given to using air recognition systems by British ground forces during Operation Granby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the Gulf conflict, a secure and effective electronic identification system for ground forces did not exist. The coalition nevertheless took such practical steps as were possible to assist identification of friendly vehicles from both the ground and the air. These included fluorescent panels and inverted "V" markings. I understand that the United States was also developing infra-red beacons and lights to complement these markings, and that a number of these were sent to the Gulf towards the end of hostilities.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he plans to have with his United States counterpart about the recent verdict of the coroner's inquest in Oxford relating to the deaths of nine British service personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend discussed the matter briefly with Secretary Cheney in the margins of the Defence Planning Committee in Brussels last week. He has no plans to discuss the inquest verdict further.

Information Release

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to change his policy relating to the release of official information on defence matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Policy in this area is kept under review to ensure that only information that is sensitive is withheld. The statement by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during the debate on the address on 6 May regarding the need to sweep away needless secrecy is particularly relevant.

War Graves, Thailand

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the physical security of British war graves in Thailand; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are British and Commonwealth war graves at Kanchanaburi and Chungkai in Thailand which are maintained by the Commonwealth Graves Commission. We have no reason to believe that the physical security of the graves is in any way threatened.

Defence Estimates

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to publish the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We expect to publish the 1992 Statement on the Defence Estimates before the summer recess.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if there have been any items accepted in lieu of tax or allocated since his predecessor's announcement on 18th February.

Mr. Mellor: Since the announcement of my right hon. Friend, the former Minister for the Arts on 18 February 1992, *Official Report*, column 72, I am pleased to inform the House of the acceptance of a further three items: a collection of silver and nine sporting paintings in lieu of £233,250 tax; a picture "Surface Substitution" in lieu of £64,400 tax and chattels from Upton house in lieu of £484,820 tax.

The chattels are to remain at Upton house, and the painting "Surface Substitution" has been allocated to the Tate gallery. No decision has yet been taken on the allocation of the collection of silver and sporting pictures.

Radio

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what changes there have been in audience figures for Radios 1, 2, 3 and 4 since the decision was taken to change their broadcasting frequency from medium wave and long wave to FM only.

Mr. Mellor: In January 1988, the Government announced that the medium wave frequencies used by BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio 3 would be made available for new services licensed by the Radio Authority. Radio 3 began broadcasting on FM only on 29 February 1992. Radio 1 and Radio 4 continue on AM and FM. The BBC decided to introduce BBC Radio 5, on the AM frequencies previously used by Radio 2, in August 1990.

I understand from the BBC that the average weekly reach for their national radio services were:

Percentages

	1987	[1]*1992*
Radio 1	30	28
Radio 2	22	13
Radio 3	5	4
Radio 4	15	15
Radio 5	—	5

[1] 1st quarter.

Since 1987, many new independent radio services have been opened.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he will allow the BBC to recommence simultaneous broadcasting on the FM and medium wave frequencies.

Mr. Mellor: No. In general, broadcasting the same programme in one area on two frequencies is a wasteful use of the radio spectrum. The BBC decided to keep its FM frequencies, which are suitable for stereo sound broadcasting. The Radio Authority is using AM frequencies to extend listener choice.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received concerning the quality of reception of Radios 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Mr. Mellor: I have received three letters from Members of Parliament and four letters from members of the public about the quality of reception for BBC Radio 1, 2, 3, and 4. This is, of course, primarily a matter for the BBC.

Consultants' Fees

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will give an estimate for the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1992-93.

Mr. Mellor: I estimate that the total sum paid out, or committed to be paid out, in fees by my Department to management consultants in 1992-93 is £878,400. Further fees may be paid out as and when the need to engage management consultants arises.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

14. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made by the United Nations team in Iraq in identifying and destroying weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Despite Iraqi obstruction and deception, United Nations inspectors have made considerable progress. Ambassador Ekeus, executive chairman of the special commission, reported his findings to the Security Council on 27 May; that report will be placed in the Library.

Destruction is well under way, and I refer my hon. Friend to the list of equipment destroyed contained in the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) in column 259.

The international community is determined to keep up the pressure; there is no question of Iraq once more becoming a threat to its neighbours.

Cyprus

16. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next meet the Turkish ambassador to discuss the situation in Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans for such a meeting. However my right hon. Friend has on several occasions this year had the opportunity to discuss Cyprus with Turkish Ministers. These meetings have been encouraging, and their tone is reflected in the current prospects for progress in the United Nations-led talks.

28. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding the continued occupation of part of Cyprus by Turkish troops.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The continued presence in Cyprus of large numbers of foreign troops is not helpful to prospects for a settlement.

29. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to visit Cyprus to discuss the situtation regarding the border dispute.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We give full support to the United Nations Secretary-General's efforts to bring about a just and lasting settlement in Cyprus. There are current grounds for optimism; all sides have accepted the ideas endorsed in Security Council resolution 750, and the recent round of talks by United Nations envoys went well. We have frequent contact with Cypriot Ministers and all other parties to the dispute. However, we believe it important not to undertake initiatives that could in any way cut across the delicate negotiations by United Nations envoys in Cyprus itself.

24. **Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Turkish Government as to the numbers of settlers from Turkey now living in northern Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not discussed this matter with the Government of Turkey.

Hong Kong

20. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to speed up the working of the joint liaison group in discussions on Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend raised the need for a faster pace of work in the Sino-British Liaison Group in his last meeting with the Chinese Foreign Minister here in March. We shall continue our efforts to achieve that at the next meeting of the group in Peking in June.

It is also important to achieve the right agreements for Hong Kong, and to take the time necessary to secure them.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

26. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken to prevent the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina whose independence he has recognised being removed by force of arms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We fully support United Nations Security Council resolution 752 of 15 May, which called for the immediate withdrawal or disbandment of the JNA and of elements of the Croatian army currently operating in Bosnia.

37. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans any new initiatives to help the people of Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzogovina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are working closely with our EC partners to find the most effective way to respond to the tragedy in Sarajevo. We fully support the efforts of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross which are doing their utmost to cope with a very difficult situation.

Middle East

27. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the current state of the middle east peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The fifth round of bilateral negotiations between the parties took place in Washington on 27 to 30 April. Although progress towards resolution of the difficult issues involved has inevitably been slow, substantive discussions are now under way. The momentum of the peace process has been maintained in the five multilateral regional working groups which have taken place in various capitals over the last three weeks.

Nuclear Tests

30. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response has been made by Her Majesty's Government to the announcement made by the French Government on 8 April of a moratorium on nuclear testing until the end of 1992.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Government's policy on nuclear testing remains unchanged. We have a continuing requirement to sustain a minimum programme of tests to maintain the effectiveness and safety of our nuclear deterrent.

South Africa

31. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he is making to the South African Government to end the visa restrictions placed upon British citizens who have taken part in anti-apartheid activities.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I understand that the South African Government are prepared to consider lifting visa restrictions on receipt of requests by the individuals concerned. The British Government have in the past made individual representations to the South African Government where visas have been refused.

Libya

32. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Libya.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the speech I made during the debate on the Queen's Speech on 8 May at columns 283-4.

Yugoslavia

33. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British relations with the constituent parts of the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom and its EC partners recognised Slovenia and Croatia as independent sovereign states on 15 January, and Bosnia-Herzegovina on 7 April. Recognition of Macedonia has been delayed on account of Greek concerns. We reserve our position of the status of the recently self-proclaimed Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Brazil

34. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Brazilian Government about human rights.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are in regular touch with the Brazilian authorities regarding the human rights situation in Brazil.

We are in touch with the President of the (federal) parliamentary commission on the extermination of street children and with the responsible co-ordinator in the state prosecutor's office.

We recently invited the President of the Rio state commission on street children to visit the United Kingdom to discuss the problem.

We have monitored the situation of rural workers and have made arrangements with the Brazilian authorities to be represented at legal proceedings where possible.

The Brazilians have demarcated a Yanomami reserve partly as the result of international pressure, including ours.

There will be a further opportunity to raise human rights questions when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister meets President Collor in Rio de Janeiro later this month.

EC Presidency

35. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's plans for the British presidency of the EC.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Her Majesty's Government will have two main priorities for the United Kingdom presidency: completion of the single market, with emphasis on public procurement, insurance and transport and energy liberalisation; and preparation for enlargement negotiations.

The Government will also take forward the future finance negotiations and develop relations with eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Baltic States

36. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with the Baltic states.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have good relations with the three Baltic states. We are giving them practical help towards consolidating their independence: so far, we have committed over £1 million to various projects through he know-how fund. We support Baltic demands for the complete withdrawal of former Soviet forces. We have concluded agreements with Estonia and Lithuania to settle gold and other claims questions, and hope to reach final settlement with Latvia soon.

Israel

38. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Israel to discuss the peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans at present to visit Israel. We are in frequent contact with the present Israeli Government on the peace process. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Levy, in Brussels on 11 May. I had a useful meeting with Mr. Levy in London on 1 May.

Kurdish People

39. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next meet the United Nations Secretary-General to discuss the position of the Kurds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our permanent representative in New York is in frequent touch with the Secretary-General on this subject. Together with the Americans and the French, we have made it clear to the Iraqis that they must end repression of their own people, including the Kurds in the north and the shi'a in the south.

Gibraltar

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals there are for Gibraltar to become a separate state within the European Community; and if he will make a statement on negotiations with Spain about the future of Gibraltar.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am not aware of any such proposals. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs plans to meet his Spanish counterpart to discuss Gibraltar later in the year, in one of the regular bilateral meetings under the Brussels negotiating process.

Refuseniks

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Alexander Zaslavsky and his family of Kiev.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Ukrainian authorities the case of refusenik Alexander Zaslavsky and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Alexander Klebanov and his family of Kuibishev.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of refusenik Alexander Klebanov and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Danil Levitan and his family of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made various representations to the Russian authorities on behalf of Mr. Levitan. In Moscow in March, I raised human rights issues with the Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister, including the case of Mr. Levitan.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Sylvia Turkova and her family in St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of refusenik Sylvia Turkova and her family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Alexander Segal and his family of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of refusenik Alexander Segal and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Yakov Sverdlov and his family of Gorky.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of refusenik Yakov Sverdlov and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Arkady Hordon and his family of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of refusenik Arkady Hordon and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Boris Metrick and his family of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of refusenik Boris Metrick and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Alexander Shaknovich and his family of Kiev.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Ukrainian authorities the case of refusenik Alexander Shaknovich and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Boma Mikhanovsky and his family of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of refusenik Boma Mikhanovsky and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Valentin Perelstein and his family in Moscow.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of refusenik Valentin Perelstein and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of refusenik Vladimir Sluchak and his family of St. Petersburg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We can raise with the Russian authorities the case of refusenik Vladimir Sluchak and his family, but to make effective representations we shall need further details.

Antarctica

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to repeal the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989 and ratify the Antarctica environmental protocol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) on 15 May at column *239*.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community's Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Education Council met on 1 June. The Tourism Council will meet on 4 June. Ministers will discuss the tourism action plan and a report on the effects of Community policies and programmes on tourism.

The Telecommunications Council will meet on 5 June and Ministers will discuss the EC Green Paper on postal services and the action plan for the introduction of advanced TV services.

The ECOFIN Council will meet on 9 June. The Council will discuss the Spanish economic convergence as part of its continuing exercise of multilateral surveillance and the Commission's proposals for the future financing of the Community—Delors II. The abolition of fiscal frontiers will also be discussed. Draft directives for the harmonisation of the rates and structures of excise duty on alcohol, mineral oils and tobacco products are also scheduled for discussion as are the draft VAT rates directive and the draft seventh VAT directive which relates to the sale of second-hand goods, works of art, antiques and collectors items. The proposed capital adequacy directive may also be considered.

The Fisheries Council will meet on 9 June. Ministers will discuss a proposal for the Council regulation laying down common marketing standards for preserved tuna and bouita. It will also discuss the progress report on the establishment of a fisheries regime in the Mediterranean and consider the Commission report on discards.

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 15 and 16 June and will discuss the Commission's proposal for the Future Financing of the Community—"Delors II package". Ministers will also discuss the necessary preparation for entry into force of the Maastricht treaty on European union. Ministers will consider preparations for the European Council and possibly progress towards establishing a European drug monitoring centre.

Ministers are likely to discuss a range of issues on EC relations with the former Soviet Union, including follow-up to the recent conference at Lisbon on aid, and progress on new trade and co-operation agreements with the principal Commonwealth of Independent States republics. Ministers will consider communications from the Commission about the Community's relations with Iran, Japan and Maghreb; aids for Poseidom, Poseican and Poseima; developments in the negotiations on the GATT Uruguay round; and the handling of the Swiss application for EC membership. Community trade and co-operation agreements with Brazil, Mongolia and Macao may be signed.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 15 and 16 June. It will discuss wild game meat and milk products. Ministers may also discuss animal health, amendments to directives 90/425 and 89/662 and reform of the common agricultural policy.

The Internal Market Council will meet on 18 and 19 June and will discuss extraction solvents. The Council may also consider contaminants in foodstuffs; colours in foodstuffs; sweeteners; European company statute, the second company law directive; procurement of services by the utilities; public procurement of services; consolidation of works directive; future system for free circulation of medicinal products; homeopathic and veterinary homeopathic medicinal products; medical devices; data protection; rental and lending directives; trademark regulations; second diplomas directive; two and three-wheel vehicles type approval; external projections; hallmarking; trans-European networks, and frontiers.

The Industry Council will meet on 17 June and will discuss the financial arrangements for the European Coal and Steel Community between now and 2002. Commission communications on the automobile, aerospace and textile industries are also likely to be considered. There may also be discussion on industrial co-operation with third countries; German proposals to give aid for the restructuring of the shipbuilding industry in the former East Germany; electronics; small and medium-sized enterprises; progress of work on maritime and on non-energy mining policy and steel carbon tax.

The Transport Council will meet on 22 and 23 June and will discuss road haulage cabotage; passenger transport cabotage; maritime cabotage and the third aviation package. Ministers may also discuss inland waterway external relations.

The Social Affairs Council will meet on 24 June. The proposed directives on working time and the protection of pregnant workers are likely to be discussed and the proposed directive on health and safety in mines and quarries may also be discussed. The Council will discuss the directives on health and safety signs and safety on construction sites. Ministers may also consider the recommendations on financial participation; amendments to regulations 1612/68 and directive 68/360 on the free movement of workers and the convergence of social protection and sufficient resources.

The Consumer Council will meet on 29 June. It will discuss general product safety; unfair contract terms; comparative advertising; EHLASS; liability of the suppliers of services and a resolution on future priorities for consumer protection policy. Ministers may also discuss distance selling, timeshare and a rapid information exchange system.

Afghanistan

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's relations with Afghanistan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A visiting mission of British officials will be in Kabul from 2 to 5 June. Its purpose will be to establish formal and friendly contact on behalf of the British Government with the interim Government now in authority there. It expects to have meetings with leading members of the interim Government. It will also look into the question of a possible reopening of our embassy in Kabul.

WALES

Disabled People (Housing)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by district council the number of *(a)* owner occupiers and private tenants and *(b)* council tenants who have applied in each of the last two years for the disabled facilities grant; in each category by district council, how many adaptations were carried out; what was the average time taken to complete adaptations from the time the request for adaptation was made; and what was the average amount paid by (i) applicants, (ii) district councils and (iii) central Government.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* Table 1 gives the numbers of disabled facilities grants paid to owner occupiers and types of tenants in each of the last two years. The information for 1990 contains only two quarters' data as the disabled facilities grants, paid under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, were only introduced in July 1990.

The average value of grants and the average contribution from the applicant towards the cost of works is given in table 2. The figures are not held centrally by tenure. The Department provides a 75 per cent. Exchequer contribution towards local authorities' expenditure in Wales on disabled facilities grants for owner-occupiers and private tenants. Expenditure on these grants for council tenants is eligible for 100 per cent. subsidy from the housing revenue account.

The information on the numbers of applications for grants and the average length of time from application to completion of grant is not centrally available.

Table 1
Numbers of completed disabled facilities grants

	Owner occupier and tenants of private sector or housing association		*Tenants of local authority, new town or the Crown*	
	1990	*1991*	*1990*	*1991*
Aberconwy	3	25	—	8
Alyn and Deeside	—	7	—	—
Arfon	—	5	—	—
Blaenau Gwent	—	24	—	—
Brecknock	—	5	—	—
Cardiff	1	91	—	3
Carmarthen	—	3	—	—
Ceredigion	—	8	—	—
Colwyn	3	16	—	—
Cynon Valley	—	11	—	—
Delyn	—	6	—	1
Dinefwr	—	7	—	—
Dwyfor	—	3	—	—
Glyndwr	—	7	—	—
Islwyn	5	107	4	185
Llanelli	1	32	—	—
Lliw Valley	—	38	—	—
Meirionnydd	—	2	—	—
Merthyr Tydfil	—	7	—	—
Monmouth	4	28	—	—
Montgomeryshire	—	2	—	—
Neath	—	31	—	—
Newport	—	25	—	—
Ogwr	2	27	—	—
Port Talbot	—	18	—	—
Preseli Pembrokeshire	—	22	—	29
Radnorshire	—	7	—	3
Rhondda	—	55	—	—
Rhuddlan	—	7	—	—
Rhymney Valley	1	69	—	—
South Pembrokeshire	1	25	—	—
Swansea	2	90	—	6
Taff-Ely	—	46	—	—
Torfaen	—	5	—	—
Vale of Glamorgan	—	31	—	7
Wrexham Maelor	—	5	—	1
Ynys Mon	—	9	—	2
WALES	23	906	4	245

Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

Table 2
Disabled Facilities Grants paid under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989

	Average Amount Paid by Applicant (£'s)		*Average Amount of Grant (£'s)*	
	1990	*1991*	*1990*	*1991*
Aberconwy	—	347	2,200	4,874
Alyn and Deeside	—	1,181	—	6,514
Arfon	—	—	—	5,378
Blaenau Gwent	—	99	—	6,215
Brecknock	—	2,890	—	9,767
Cardiff	43	374	2,055	10,672
Carmarthen	—	—	—	13,559
Ceredigion	—	713	—	9,346
Colwyn	2,036	111	830	1,618
Cynon Valley	—	427	—	1,947
Delyn	—	—	—	838
Dinefwr	—	505	—	2,107
Dwyfor	—	—	—	6,972
Glyndwr	—	52	—	5,701
Islwyn	—	60	1,231	1,877
Llanelli	—	183	8,204	3,439
Lliw Valley	—	98	—	5,710
Meirionnydd	—	196	—	1,532
Merthyr Tydfil	—	20	—	3,303
Monmouth	—	—	2,473	2,061
Montgomeryshire	—	—	—	8,940
Neath	—	379	—	4,829
Newport	—	148	—	4,743
Ogwr	—	183	1,883	3,954
Port Talbot	—	298	—	2,358

	Average Amount Paid by Applicant (£'s)		Average Amount of Grant (£'s)	
	1990	1991	1990	1991
Preseli Pembrokeshire	—	330	—	3,489
Radnorshire	—	—	—	4,640
Rhondda	—	92	—	2,227
Rhuddlan	—	77	—	5,277
Rhymney Valley	—	231	—	1,804
South Pembrokeshire	—	311	3,855	5,136
Swansea	958	102	2,142	3,461
Taff-Ely	—	131	—	2,864
Torfaen	—	112	—	8,396
Vale of Glamorgan	—	221	—	3,510
Wrexham Maelor	—	341	—	4,155
Ynys Mon	—	—	—	5,440
Wales	2,988	185	1,979	3,837

Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by district council, the number of applications made for adaptations to the homes of disabled people in each of the last five years; how many adaptations were carried out in each year; and what was the average length of time to complete adaptations from the request for an adaptation to be made to its conclusion.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* The numbers of grants completed for disabled people under the Housing Act 1985 and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, introduced in April 1990, are given in table 1. Local authorities also perform adaptations on their own stock to provide dwellings suitable for the disabled. Table 2 contains this information.

Information on the numbers of applications for grants and the average length of time from application to completion of grant is not centrally available.

Table 1
Numbers of grants paid to disabled people under the Housing Act 1985 and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Aberconwy	13	76	38	54	40
Alyn and Deeside	31	54	26	33	17
Arfon	54	64	61	35	15
Blaenau Gwent	—	15	26	76	29
Brecknock	—	—	—	2	5
Cardiff	288	395	361	334	245
Carmarthen	44	33	37	33	9
Ceredigion	40	39	49	55	28
Colwyn	24	93	146	222	19
Cynon Valley	53	43	29	22	19
Delyn	25	31	29	22	11
Dinefwr	26	20	19	28	26
Dwyfor	6	10	11	14	4
Glyndwr	20	19	20	27	14
Islwyn	442	555	622	507	328
Llanelli	23	81	39	135	45
Lliw Valley	105	85	112	128	61
Meirionnydd	19	12	15	18	7
Merthyr Tydfil	12	14	10	6	9
Monmouth	21	70	57	47	32
Montgomeryshire	13	25	35	27	2
Neath	—	27	69	62	35
Newport	123	156	109	149	38
Ogwr	96	96	95	161	54
Port Talbot	21	33	22	86	31
Preseli Pembrokeshire	68	108	212	246	87
Radnorshire	1	—	1	2	10
Rhondda	40	26	32	12	55
Rhuddlan	31	16	17	9	7
Rhymney Valley	59	43	88	114	81
South Pembrokeshire	34	24	68	68	31
Swansea	213	175	252	307	154
Taff-Ely	73	70	76	99	51
Torfaen	176	61	74	95	41
Vale of Glamorgan	84	69	79	109	66
Wrexham Maelor	1	1	2	—	6
Ynys Mon	46	48	55	41	19
Wales	2,325	2,687	2,993	3,385	1,731

Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

Table 2
Adaptations by local authorities for disabled people

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Aberconwy	5	9	19	21	39
Alyn and Deeside	28	11	—	7	8
Arfon	1	1	5	—	1
Blaenau Gwent	—	—	—	—	3
Brecknock	23	26	12	41	49
Cardiff	—	3	—	—	—
Carmarthen	83	50	44	54	47
Ceredigion	—	—	—	—	3
Colwyn	60	74	75	56	153
Cynon Valley	—	—	—	—	—
Delyn	55	45	10	—	14
Dinefwr	38	37	1	—	4
Dwyfor	—	—	1	1	2
Glyndwr	—	—	—	—	—
Islwyn	—	—	—	195	296
Llanelli	—	—	—	—	—
Lliw Valley	131	137	105	169	155
Meirionnydd	—	—	—	—	—
Merthyr Tydfil	—	—	—	—	—
Monmouth	—	—	—	33	—
Montgomeryshire	1	28	18	12	90
Neath	28	43	59	121	103
Newport	340	396	320	161	192
Ogwr	9	27	35	34	18
Port Talbot	132	38	265	157	91
Preseli Pembrokeshire	36	20	32	27	61
Radnorshire	—	—	—	—	—
Rhondda	180	261	242	221	343
Rhuddlan	—	—	11	2	—
Rhymney Valley	—	—	—	230	521
South Pembrokeshire	109	122	109	103	96
Swansea	983	939	378	309	505
Taff-Ely	—	—	—	—	—
Torfaen	501	590	729	699	487
Vale of Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	56
Wrexham Maelor	68	39	31	55	101
Ynys Mon	9	2	—	—	—
Wales	2,820	2,898	2,501	2,708	3,438

Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by district council, the amount of money spent on adaptations to the homes of disabled people in each of the last five years; and what contribution was made towards these costs from central Government funds.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 18 May 1992]:* The amounts of grant paid to disabled people under the Housing Act 1985 and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, introduced in April 1990, are given in the table. In addition to expenditure through grants, local authorities and social services spend money adapting dwellings for disabled people. This information is not centrally available.

Because the support arrangements in Wales and England are similar, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the

reply given to him on 2 June by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment.

Amounts of Grants Paid to Disabled People under the Housing Act 1985 and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989

Amounts (£000's)

	1985 Act					1989 Act		Totals	
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1990*	*1991*	*1990*	*1991*
Aberconwy	24	108	84	57	5	7	166	63	170
Alyn and Deeside	67	94	52	69	27	—	46	69	72
Arfon	200	227	230	157	65	—	27	157	91
Blaenau Gwent	—	24	34	220	13	—	149	220	162
Brecknock	—	—	—	8	—	—	49	8	49
Cardiff	527	848	822	982	458	2	1,014	984	1,471
Carmarthen	115	82	113	81	28	—	41	81	69
Ceredigion	94	98	147	172	104	—	75	172	178
Colwyn	83	111	127	162	4	2	26	164	30
Cynon Valley	68	90	497	48	10	—	21	48	32
Delyn	54	79	65	62	28	—	6	62	33
Dinefwr	48	27	35	86	83	—	15	86	98
Dwyfor	14	44	38	57	1	—	21	57	22
Glyndwr	36	40	32	93	17	—	46	93	63
Islwyn	552	740	826	642	42	11	572	654	615
Llanelli	35	133	57	200	38	8	110	209	148
Lliw Valley	212	190	247	339	117	—	217	339	334
Meirionnydd	19	14	18	52	21	—	3	52	24
Merthyr Tydfil	24	38	40	28	22	—	23	28	46
Monmouth	41	71	77	73	9	10	58	83	67
Montgomeryshire	27	53	101	39	—	—	18	39	18
Neath	—	58	115	109	15	—	150	109	164
Newport	215	334	110	224	65	—	119	224	184
Ogwr	123	116	154	364	118	4	107	368	225
Port Talbot	26	45	34	115	19	—	42	115	62
Preseli Pembrokeshire	227	290	412	560	155	—	178	560	333
Radnorshire	2	—	2	2	—	—	46	2	46
Rhondda	100	99	95	48	—	—	123	48	123
Rhuddlan	37	35	42	16	—	—	37	16	37
Rhymney Valley	75	51	135	169	36	1	125	170	161
South Pembrokeshire	81	51	184	113	25	4	128	117	153
Swansea	880	797	1,334	1,494	307	4	332	1,498	639
Taff-Ely	68	64	58	109	19	—	132	109	151
Torfaen	335	190	193	319	181	—	42	319	223
Vale of Glamorgan	218	134	223	336	84	—	154	336	239
Wrexham Maelor	1	1	4	—	—	—	25	—	25
Ynys Mon	153	112	141	139	35	—	60	139	95
Wales	4,778	5,488	6,878	7,747	2,150	53	4,501	7,800	6,651

Source: Welsh Office local authority returns.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Photo-Identity Passes

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will list each type of parliamentary photo-identity pass and the number currently issued of each type.

Mr. Beith: It is not considered desirable to publish detailed information about the security pass system. If the hon. Member has any matter of specific concern he should consult the Serjeant at Arms.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission (1) what percentage of the total work force employed by the House of Commons Commission is registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within the House; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to implement additional measures to encourage the employment of disabled people in the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Beith: The number of registered disabled persons employed by the Commission represents 0·7 per cent. of the total House of Commons staff. That figure does not include registered disabled persons employed by Members or by organisations in the House for which the Commission does not at present have responsibility.

The Commission's policy on the employment of disabled persons is based on the policy set out in the Commission's fourth annual report for 1981-82 (HC 418, Session 1981-82). The Commission has appointed a disabled persons officer who is responsible for promulgating the Commission's policy on the employment of disabled people and for advising management and staff on matters concerning disablement. He keeps up to date with civil service policy on disablement and from time to time arranges seminars for departmental management with organisations concerned with disabled people.

Implementation of the Commission's policy is effected through a number of practical measures:

(1) All press advertisements for vacancies in the House of Commons Service bear the legend "Applications from Registered Disabled Persons are welcomed".
(2) Information is given to applicants for House of Commons vacancies which makes it clear that disablement in itself is not a bar to employment provided the disability does not prevent the postholder from satisfactorily carrying out the duties of the post.
(3) Management will provide special equipment, appliances, etc. to assist disabled staff in carrying out their duties.
(4) Provided registered disabled applicants for House of Commons posts have the qualifications and experience called for in recruitment literature, they will be called to interview unless it is clear from their application form that their disability would prevent them from satisfactorily carrying out the duties of the post.
(5) An unestablished (health) appointment may be offered in cases where there is a doubt as to whether a candidate can meet the House of Commons Service health standard. This provides a period of employment for up to five years in which a candidate's health can be reviewed prior to a final decision being taken on whether he/she satisfies the health standard required for permanent appointments.
(6) Registered disabled persons who do not possess the academic qualifications specified for certain clerical posts may opt to take the clerical tests as a means of providing evidence that their general level of education is adequate to meet the needs of the post.

SCOTLAND

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he takes to ensure that the housing co-operative sector is fully consulted on matters which concern it; and if he wil make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Housing co-operatives are represented by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and the Confederation of Scottish Housing Co-operatives, a forum within the federation. Scottish Homes consults regularly with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made to expand the number of housing co-operatives and other tenant-led initiatives in Scotland and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend is committed to supporting housing co-operatives and other tenant-led initiatives since they give tenants a greater say in the management of their housing. This commitment has been demonstrated through the substantial resources devoted to the finance of housing associations and housing co-operatives since 1979, particularly since the establishment of Scottish Homes in 1989. Since 1 April 1989, housing co-operatives have totalled 40 per cent. of new housing association registrations and now represent 16 per cent. of registered housing associations compared to 11 per cent. in 1989.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ensure that the housing co-operative sector is represented on the board of Scottish Homes; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: All members of the Scottish Homes board are appointed for their potential personal contribution and not as representatives of particular sectional, geographical or political interests. The present board has a mix of expertise and, in considering future appointments, my right hon. Friend's aim will be to achieve the mix appropriate to Scottish Homes' needs at the time. The housing co-operative sector may well contain potential candidates for the board but they will be considered on their merits as individuals, not as representatives of that sector.

Urban Aid

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list of programmes and projects receiving urban aid in the current financial year, the capital and annual revenue value of each, the sponsoring organisation and the date that each commenced and is due to terminate.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am arranging for the information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the amount of urban aid finance, both in terms of capital and revenue expenditure, awarded to each area of priority treatment in Strathclyde on a per capita basis; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* Information is not held in the form requested. Inquiries are being made as to whether it can be produced without disproportionate cost and I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of persons registered in Scotland on *(a)* an electoral register and *(b)* community charge register.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: OPCS Monitor (EL 92/1) published on 2 April 1992 shows the total number of parliamentary electors in Scotland, including attainers, service voters and voluntary patients, on the 1992 electoral registers as 3,929,112. The publication date for the registers is 16 February 1992. The total number of persons on the community charge register in Scotland, as at 1 June 1991 was 3,834,276.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will mount a major campaign to promote electoral registration in conjunction with local authorities in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend is satisfied that the significant sums currently spent on publicity for electoral registration purposes represent good value for money. For 1992-93 the campaign budget for electoral registration publicity is £48,000.

Higher Education Funding Council

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will announce the membership of the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what guidance he intends to issue to the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council on the exercise of its functions.

Mr. Lang: I am pleased to confirm that Professor John C. Shaw CBE, deputy governor of the Bank of Scotland has accepted formal appointment as part-time chairman of the council with immediate effect. I am grateful to Professor Shaw for the considerable efforts he has already made in his capacity as chairman designate. I have today sent a letter of guidance to Professor Shaw setting out how I expect the council to approach its responsibilities. The letter covers the council's functions and organisation, aspects of Government policy of particular relevance to the council, and the framework through which the council will account for their activities. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library.

I am also delighted to announce that Professor John Sizer CBE, the head of the business school and professor of financial management at Loughborough university, has agreed to serve as the council's chief executive. Professor Sizer will also sit on the council in an ex officio capacity.

In addition to Professor Shaw and Professor Sizer, the following have agreed to accept appointment to the council:

Professor Michael Bond, vice-principal and administrative dean of the faculty of medicine, university of Glasgow.
Dr. Christopher Carter, vice-principal, Duncan of Jordanstone college of art.
Professor John Darby, Assistant principal, Napier polytechnic.
Professor Robert Jack CBE, senior partner, McGrigor Donald, solicitors, and professor of mercantile law, university of Glasgow.
Mr. John McClelland, UK director of manufacturing and hardware at IBM.
Mr. Ronald Miller CBE, executive chairman of Dawson International.
Miss Eileen Murdoch OBE, headmistress, St. Augustine's school, Edinburgh.
Professor Janet Sprent, professor of plant biology, university of Dundee.
Mr. Ian Wood CBE, chairman and managing director of the John Wood Group plc.
Mr. James Wright, vice chancellor, university of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

I am confident we have achieved an excellent blend of academic, industrial and professional experience which will serve the new council well in the exciting and important tasks which lie ahead.

SCOTLAND

Management Agreements

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the management agreements entered into under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in each year since 1982; and if he will give, in each case, the types of development which have been proposed by the landowner, and are prohibited under the agreement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* The information is not held by the Scottish Office environment department. I shall ask Scottish Natural Heritage to write to the hon. Member.

Forestry Commission Land

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the criteria used by the Forestry Commission when choosing plantation and plantable land for sale; whether particular land has been designated which will not be sold; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The Forestry Commission follows the guidelines on the selection of areas for disposal set out by the then Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr. George Younger, in a letter to the Forestry Commission chairman dated 28 May 1981. This letter was reproduced at appendix V of the commission's 1981-82 annual report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the sites where *(a)* access agreements have been reached and *(b)* are being negotiated following the sale of Forestry Commission land in each county or Scottish region in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* Where access agreements are negotiated and agreed, this is done before the sale of the woodland.

One access agreement has been agreed for land at Steam Mills in Gloucestershire.

Fourteen access agreements are currently being negotiated in Devon, East Sussex, Humberside, North Yorkshire, Somerset (two), West Sussex, Dyfed (five), Gwent and West Glamorgan. It would not be appropriate to list the particular sites while these negotiations are in progress.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what amount has been received by Her Majesty's Government from sale of Forestry Commission land; what is his current estimate of total receipts from the disposal of Forestry Commission land; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* A total of £161·5 million was raised from the sale of Forestry Commission land and property between 1981 and 31 March 1992. Estimates of receipts from such sales for the three years to 31 March 1995 have been published in the Government's Expenditure Plans 1992-93 to 1994-95 (Cm 1915), as follows:

	£ million
1992-93	15·0
1993-94	16·0
1994-95	16·0

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The running costs of the Scottish Office information directorate for each year from 1985-86 are as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	0·9
1986-87	1·0
1987-88	1·1
1988-89	1·2
1989-90	1·4
1990-91	1·7
1991-92	1·9
1992-93	[1]2·0

[1] Estimate.

These figures exclude expenditure on information campaigns

Directly comparable figures for years prior to the introduction of new Scottish Office budgetary arrangements in 1985-86 are not available.

Consultants' Fees

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave him on 7 May 1991 at column *421*. Additional information for the years 1991-92 and 1992-93 is as follows:

	£
1991-92	[1]1,235,070
1992-93	[2]956,669

[1] Outturn.
[2] Estimated figure.

Birds of Prey

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of birds of prey that have been killed by persons in each year since 1987.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The numbers of birds of prey recorded as having been poisoned in Scotland are:

	Number
1987	11
1988	12
1989	16
1990	17
1991	12

Information about numbers of birds of prey killed in other ways is not available centrally.

Public Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the public opinion surveys carried out by his Department since 1 November 1991.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* I shall place a list of surveys in the Library as soon as possible.

Urban Aid Grants

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he applies when considering applications for urban aid grants; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* Following a review of the urban programme new guidelines were published on 20 February 1992 aimed at strengthening its impact. These included the revised eligibility and priority criteria which will apply to future applications for funding under the urban programme. A copy of the guidelines has been placed in the Library of the House.

Health Service Trusts

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what consultations he intends to carry out with local people regarding applications by hospitals and services for trust status within the Argyll and Clyde health board; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he plans to consider any formal expressions of interest in trust status from hospitals or services with Argyll and Clyde health board; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many formal expressions of interest in applying for trust status have been received from hospitals or services within the Argyll and Clyde health board area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* A formal expression of interest in NHS trust status has been made on behalf of staff at the Royal Alexandra hospital, Paisley. Any application which results will be subject to the statutory three months' public consultation.

Community Policing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the chief constable of Strathclyde to discuss community policing; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. Deployment of police officers is a matter for the chief constable within the overall resources available to him. I am sure that the chief constable will have noted the comment of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, in his recent report on Strathclyde police, commending the steps taken by the force to promote community policing, and underlining the need for every effort to be made to maintain and expand such policing. What can be achieved depends in part on the resources made available by the police authority.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was granted to farmers in Scotland through the ESA scheme in 1990-91.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* Approximately £967,000 was paid in 1990-91 to farmers and crofters in connection with the ESA scheme in Scotland.

Industrial and Commercial Co-operatives

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures are in place to assist the development of industrial and commercial co-operatives; what plans he has to amend these; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* About £200,000 per annum is paid currently from the urban programme to five workers' co-operative development projects in deprived urban areas of

Strathclyde and Fife regions. Under the new urban programme guidelines issued in February, applications for funding other such projects can still be made.

Renfrewshire Enterprise

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of Renfrewshire Enterprise's 1992-93 budget for *(a)* capital and *(b)* revenue expenditure was legally committed on 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 2 March 1992, *Official Report*, column 69.

Scottish Enterprise

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the Scottish Office contribution to *(a)* the capital and *(b)* the revenue budgets of each Scottish Enterprise company for 1991 to 1993 on a per capita basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The allocation of resources to local enterprise companies is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Trees

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those species of tree which currently provide a significant proportion of tree cover in the United Kingdom, estimating for each species what proportion of tree cover is provided; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The proportion of each tree species in United Kingdom woodlands are as follows:

Species	*Tree cover percentage*
Broadleaves	
Oak	8
Birch	6
Ash	3
Beech	3
Sycamore	3
Other broadleaves	9
Conifers	
Sitka spruce	33
Scots pine	10
Lodgepole pine	7
Larch	7
Norway spruce	4
Other conifers	7

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage area of Britain is covered by forest and woodland currently; and what is his forecast for the year 2000.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* Some 10·3 per cent. of Britain is currently covered by forest and woodland. This is expected to increase to about 11 per cent. by the year 2000.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total acreage in each county of evergreen forest and deciduous forest for each of the last 15 years; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The latest year for which information is available on areas of woodland by county is 1980. This is given in Forestry Commission Bulletin 63, Census of Woodlands and Trees 1979-82, a copy of which is in the Library.

This information is not available for any other period in the last 15 years, but the total areas of woodland by country, divided between conifers and broadleaves, has been published each year by the Forestry Commission in "Forestry Facts and Figures". These figures are given in the table.

Thousand hectares

	Conifers	*Broadleaves*	*Other woodland*[1]	*Total*
England				
1977	401	324	180	905
1978	404	323	173	900
1979	405	323	172	900
1980	407	322	171	900
1981	408	322	170	900
1982	407	324	169	900
[2]1983	395	458	91	944
1984	397	458	90	945
1985	395	460	90	945
1986	395	461	90	946
1987	396	464	90	950
1988	393	467	90	950
1989	395	468	90	953
[3]1990	386	469	103	958
1991	385	471	102	958
Scotland				
1977	728	39	92	859
1978	743	39	85	867
1979	760	39	84	883
1980	781	39	84	904
1981	798	39	84	921
1982	818	39	83	940
[2]1983	831	76	71	978
1984	853	76	71	1,000
1985	871	76	70	1,017
1986	891	77	70	1,038
1987	918	78	71	1,067
1988	937	78	72	1,087
1989	956	79	72	1,107
[3]1990	956	83	81	1,120
1991	962	87	82	1,131
Wales				
1977	164	33	33	230
1978	165	33	32	230
1979	166	33	32	231
1980	167	33	32	232
1981	169	33	31	233
1982	170	33	32	235
[2]1983	172	61	10	243
1984	173	61	10	244
1985	174	61	10	245
1986	175	61	10	246
1987	176	62	10	248
1988	175	62	11	248
1989	175	62	10	247
[3]1990	173	63	12	248
1991	172	63	12	247

[1] Other woodland consists of scrub, felled woodland and other areas managed chiefly for amenity and public recreation.
[2] The figures for 1983 and subsequent years are based on the Census of Woodlands and Trees, 1979-82. This resulted in a significant reclassification of forest land.
[3] In 1990, 25,000 hectares of Forestry Commission woodland were reclassified as other woodland.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of *(a)* deciduous and

(b) evergreen trees planted in the United Kingdom for each of the last 10 years; and if he will give his estimate of the number felled.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* No record is kept of the number of trees planted, although an estimate can be made from the areas of conifers and broadleaves planted or grant-aided by the Forestry Commission over the last 10 years. These are as follows:

Year ended 31 March	*Area planted (thousands hectares)*		*Estimated numbers planted (millions)*	
	conifers	*broadleaves*	*conifers*	*broadleaves*
1982	31	1	78	1
1983	29	2	73	2
1984	33	2	83	2
1985	28	2	70	2
1986	32	3	80	3
1987	33	4	83	5
1988	36	6	90	7
1989	37	6	91	7
1990	24	10	59	11
1991	22	11	56	12

Information is available on the volume of timber felled each year, but it is not possible to convert this into an estimate of the number of trees felled. However, when granting permission for tree felling the Forestry Commission normally requires that the trees are replaced.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to use market instruments to encourage preservation and planting of native wildwoods in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* In accordance with the Government's policy, the Forestry Commission's woodland grant scheme offers grants to private owners for the management and extension of native woodlands. Management grants were introduced from 1 April this year and include a special rate for ancient and semi-natural woodlands.

Johnstone Clinic

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the new Johnstone clinic to open; what services it will provide to the local community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The position remains as set out in replies to the hon. Member of 13 February and 22 October 1991. The clinic will open this summer and will provide the following services.

Audiology
Ante natal
Child health
Child physiotherapy
Adult physiotherapy
Chiropody
Coronary screening
Cytology
Dental
Family planning
Family psychology
Hearing tests
Menopause clinic
Mother craft
Orthoptics
Psychiatry
Speech therapy
Ear, nose and throat

Housing Revenue Account Allocations

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to announce supplementary housing revenue account allocations or additional capital consent for district councils within the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* Yes. Supplementary housing capital allocations will be made later in the year to authorities incurring expenditure under the provisions for assistance to owners of defective housing in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. Other supplementary housing capital allocations will be considered if resources become available. In addition, councils in former coal-mining areas eligible to receive RECHAR grants have been advised that non-housing supplementary consents will be issued matching RECHAR receipts from the European Commission.

Housing Associations

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to develop the role of housing associations and housing co-operatives; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* My right hon. Friend's commitment to the development of housing associations as the main provider of new social rented housing has been demonstrated through the substantial resources allocated to Scottish Homes and, before 1989, to one of its predecessor bodies, the Housing Corporation in Scotland. As a result of this commitment it was recently possible to celebrate the opening of the 50,000th grant-aided housing association unit in Scotland.

My right hon. Friend is committed to giving tenants a greater say in the management of their own housing. The continued development of housing associations and co-operatives will play an important role in achieving that objective. Over £200 million of Scottish Homes' total programme of £333 million will go to housing associations and co-operatives in 1992-93.

Argyll and Clyde Health Board

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the chairman of Argyll and Clyde health board to discuss the provision of health services in that area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* My noble and learned Friend Lord Fraser meets health board chairmen on a regular basis to discuss the provision of health services in Scotland. The next meeting is scheduled for 10 July 1992.

Court Administration

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to review court administration procedures with a view to improving the utilisation of court time and police resources; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The programming of business in the courts is a responsibility of the judicial heads of these courts and not of the Executive. Programming in the sheriff courts is at present being reviewed by groups under the chairmanship of Sheriff Principal Gordon Nicholson QC and Sheriff Graham Cox, and we await the outcome with interest.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each local enterprise company area, or other feasible sub-regional classification, in Scotland, and for Scotland and Great Britain as a whole, for the latest available period, the number and proportion of employment training ex-trainees who were *(a)* self-employed, *(b)* in a job club, *(c)* unemployed and claiming benefit, *(d)* unemployed and not claiming benefit, and *(e)* other.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The information, disaggregated by local enterprise company area in those cases where sufficient information is available, is set out in the table.

Employment training leavers: August 1990 to July 1991[1]
Current activity 3 months after leaving

Local enterprise company	*(A) Self-employed (including EAS)*	*(B) Jobclub*	*(C) Unemployed claiming benefit*	*(D) Unemployed not claiming benefit*
Enterprise Ayrshire Ltd.	3	2	59	5
Dunbartonshire Enterprise	6	2	47	6
Dumfries and Galloway Enterprise	9	3	47	6
Glasgow Development Agency	2	4	59	3
Lanarkshire Development Agency	4	3	54	5
Renfrewshire Enterprise	1	4	51	5
Scotland	5	3	52	5
Great Britain[2]	6	3	51	6

Local enterprise company	*(E) Other*						
	Full time job: work experience provider	*Full time job: other employer*	*Voluntary work*	*Part time job (under 30 HPW)*	*Other Government training programme*	*Full time education/ training*	*Something else*
Enterprise Ayrshire Ltd.	[illegible]	12	2	6	1	2	2
Dunbartonshire Enterprise	7	17	2	6	1	1	5
Dumfries and Galloway Enterprise	8	10	3	7	—	3	4
Glasgow Development Agency	7	12	2	4	2	2	2
Lanarkshire Development Agency	8	12	4	4	1	2	3
Renfrewshire Enterprise	12	14	2	5	1	2	3
Scottish Enterprise Tayside	—	—	—	—	—	5	—
Scotland	9	12	3	6	1	3	3
Great Britain[2]	7	12	3	7	1	2	3

All figures are percentages; and totals may not sum to 100 because of roundings.
[1] August-December 1990 leavers followed up after 3 months, January-July 1991 after 6 months.
[2] Includes records not identified to a particular area.

Training

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each local enterprise company area in Scotland and for Scotland and Great Britain as a whole, for the latest available period, the qualifications gained by employment training trainees, and any credits towards qualifications.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The figures shown in the table list the full vocational qualifications gained by employment training trainees within each local enterprise company area and for Scotland as a whole both during March 1992 and over the full year (1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992). Information is not collected in this form on credits gained towards vocational qualifications.

Vocational qualification and level achieved

Local enterprise company	*March 1992*				*1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992*			
	I	*II*	*III*	*IV*	*I*	*II*	*III*	*IV*
Argyll and Islands Enterprise	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Inverness and Nairn Enterprise	—	—	—	—	9	8	5	—
Orkney Enterprise	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—
Ross and Cromarty Enterprise	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	—
Western Isles Enterprise	1	—	2	—	26	24	7	—
Enterprise Ayrshire Ltd.	43	7	—	—	227	79	35	0
Forth Valley Enterprise	8	16	2	—	83	163	20	25
Dunbartonshire Enterprise	3	1	—	—	117	26	—	10
Dumfries and Galloway Enterprise	7	—	—	—	82	12	—	—
Fife Enterprise	—	4	—	—	20	25	9	—
Glasgow Development Agency	158	62	5	—	755	258	67	—
Grampian Enterprise	5	—	—	—	5	4	8	—
Lanarkshire Development Agency	30	—	—	—	405	44	36	—
Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise	6	15	1	—	90	105	71	—
Renfrewshire Enterprise	38	23	—	—	397	124	4	—
Scottish Enterprise Tayside	3	—	—	—	138	36	34	—
Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise	—	—	—	—	30	19	1	—

Local enterprise company	March 1992 I	II	III	IV	1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992 I	II	III	IV
Scotland	302	128	10	—	2,385	[illegible]	297	35

The most reliable information for Great Britain as a whole is available on a different basis. The relevant figures, expressed in percentage terms, are:

	Per cent.
Worked for qualification or credit	45
Gained qualification or credit	30
Not gained qualification or credit	12
Awaiting results	3
Completed agreed training	49

Debt Payment

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what distribution has taken place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility of the Department of Employment's publication "Making the Cash Flow—a Guide to the Payment of Commercial Debt for Buyers and Small Business Suppliers".

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* "Making the Cash Flow" was prepared as guidance for the private sector and there was therefore no formal distribution to other Government Departments. Guidelines on purchasing by Government Departments already exist and are distributed by Her Majesty's Treasury.

The Department of Employment has been undertaking a survey of the payment record of Government Departments during the financial year 1991-92 and the results of this exercise will be published in the near future by the Department of Trade and Industry, which now has responsibility for small firm issues, including late payment. After studying these results the Department will consider what further measures, if any, may be necessary to encourage prompt payment by the public sector.

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what policy guidelines are currently in place within his Department and the purchasing organisations for which he has responsibility in respect of the prompt payment of commercial debt, particularly as it relates to small business suppliers.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* Government Departments, including their executive agencies, are required to pay their bills promptly. The timing of payment should normally be stipulated in Government contracts. Where there is no contractual position or other understanding, Departments should pay within 30 days of receipt of goods/services or the presentation of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment, whichever is the later.

To help encourage prompt payment of bills by Government contractors to their sub-contractors all Government contracts are to contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay its sub contractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the sub-contractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

A7

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to commence the study he recently undertook to conduct into the potential economic impact on local retailers of the proposal to re-route the A7 through the town of Hawick avoiding North Bridge street; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* I expect the commission to be awarded and the assessment to begin before the end of June.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now authorise the Borders road authority to undertake the necessary preparatory work to enable the Colterscleuch stretch of the A7 to be improved along the existing line of the road at the earliest possible date; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* Borders regional council has already been commissioned to prepare an appropriate scheme to improve the A7 at Colterscleuch. The brief involves comparative analyses of potential improvements both along the existing alignment and on a new alignment so that the optimum scheme can be identified. Design work is proceeding on both these options in parallel and good progress is being made. It is anticipated that a preferred scheme can be chosen and fully designed by spring next year.

Completion of statutory procedures, including resolution or determination of any objections, and the availability of finance, will, of course, influence when construction can start.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The figures for 1988-89 to 1991-92 were:

	1988-89 (£)	1989-90 (£)	1990-91 (£)	1991-92 (£)
Television advertising	576,000	974,000	741,000	556,000
Radio advertising	40,000	85,000	188,000	141,000
Newspaper advertising	378,000	1,022,000	613,000	853,000
Other promotional material	933,000	1,001,000	1,098,000	799,000

An analysis for 1979-80 to 1987-88 is not available in the form requested.

Detailed decisions on expenditure by media for 1992-93 have not yet been taken.

Nursery Education

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of three and four-year-old children were receiving nursery education at local authority maintained nursery schools in each education authority area in Scotland during the present academic year, or at the latest date for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

Regional education authority	*No. of three and four-year-olds receiving nursery education*[1]	*Percentage of three and four-year-old population in region*[2]
Borders	484	20·1
Central	2,733	41·4
Dumfries and Galloway	825	23·3
Fife	4,552	49·4
Grampian	3,867	29·8
Highland	835	15·5
Lothian	8,709	47·3
Strathclyde	18,799	30·7
Tayside	3,357	34·6
Orkney	89	17·8
Shetland	238	35·7
Western Isles	—	—
Scotland total	44,488	33·9

[1] As at September 1991.

[2] Based on the latest available estimates of the three and four-year-old population at mid-1990.

A1

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his Department's plans for improvements to the A1 trunk road in East Lothian, giving the timetable, route and cost for dualling the sections between Bankton and Amisfield and onwards to Dunbar.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* I am pleased to announce that the draft enabling orders and scheme for reclassifying, as a special road, the section of existing dual carriageway between old Craighall roundabout and Tranent and for extending the special road by dualling the A1 between Tranent and east of Haddington were published last Friday, 29 May 1992. A public exhibition of the proposals is being held locally from today until Thursday. The alignment of the route is defined in the draft instruments, copies of which have been deposited in several public buildings along the route for public inspection. The proposed route of the new road follows a line to the north of Gladsmuir and to the north of Haddington. The estimated cost of the scheme is £36 million.

Although the route proposed has been carefully selected the reaction to it may influence the timetable for concluding the necessary statutory procedures. As announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 5 March 1992, subject to good progress with these procedures, development of the design should enable a start to works in the period 1993-94 to 1994-95 as announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 5 March 1992.

Preparation work for the more easterly section from east of Haddington to Dunbar is also under way, following the published section by approximately 12 months. No decisions have yet been taken on a proposed alignment of that section.

Fish Farming

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he proposes to take to assist the fish farming industry following the expiry of the EC minimum import price regulations on 31 May; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* My officials have had discussions with the two salmon farmers' associations about ideas to restore stability to the EC market for salmon, including the establishment of producer organisations. We expect detailed proposals from the industry very shortly.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 4 June 1992

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Cash Limits

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limit and running costs limit for 1992-93.

Mr. Mellor: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made.

The running cost limit for class XII, vote 4 of £2,410,000 will be increased by £3,164,000 to £5,574,000. The running cost limit for class VIII, vote 6, will be £8,356,000 as before on the transfer of responsibility for that vote from the Department of the Environment to the Department of National Heritage. The total running cost limit therefore becomes £13,930,000.

The increase gives effect to the creation of the new Department of National Heritage. It takes provisions in respect of the functions transferred from the Office of Arts and Libraries, the Department of the Environment, the Home Office, the Department of Employment, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department for Education to form the new Department. The increase will be met by payments from these Departments and will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Football Grounds

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if there is to be a reconsideration of the policy towards the all-seating requirement at football matches.

Mr. Mellor: The Government keep under continual scrutiny the safety of sports grounds. We continue to support the principles of improved spectator safety and comfort which were set out by Lord Justice Taylor in his final report on the Hillsborough stadium disaster. In recent months we have been examining the all-seating requirement for Football League grounds in the context of the representations that have been made and our concern to ensure the highest standards of safety given all the factors involved, including the size of particular grounds, league status and the financial health of the clubs concerned. However, the safety of our sports grounds must remain paramount.

We have decided that it would be wrong to review either the principle or the timetable for all seating at first division grounds in the Football League, the new premier league. It is essential that our top clubs meet the standards necessary to compete in Europe and make full use of the resources available to them to provide grounds of which we can all be proud. We also remain firmly committed to the principle of all-seating for the great majority of second division clubs.

However, there may be equally compelling reasons not to proceed with an all-seating requirement at all third and fourth division clubs in the Football League. We also need to consider the position of those second division clubs with very low average attendances. Further representations are being invited from a number of interested organisations to assist me in finalising our re-examination of these and related issues. I have set a four-week period for the receipt of these further views and I shall announce my conclusions speedily thereafter.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Scotland, will make a separate statement about the position in Scotland.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Postgraduate Student Awards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will increase the amount of money available to research councils and similar bodies for funding postgraduate student awards.

Mr. Waldegrave: The five research councils, the Royal Society and the Fellowship of Engineering receive substantial funding through the science budget to develop and maintain a world competitive United Kingdom science base. Within the resources available to them, the research councils are free to determine the numbers of postgraduate awards they make and the level of tax-free maintenance grant paid to students.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of the total work force of the civil service are registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within the civil service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: A total of 1·4 per cent. of civil servants are registered as disabled. This is above the proportion —1·2 per cent.—of people registered disabled in the work force as a whole. In addition, the civil service employs many people with disabilities who have chosen not to register. Progress on the employment of people with disabilities in the civil service is reported on annually in the OMCS publication "Independent", copies of which are placed in the Library of the House.

My Department issues a revised code of practice on the employment of people with disabilities in the civil service in 1990 and will continue to develop and spread best practice and to monitor progress. A recent initiative is the development by the Civil Service college of positive action training for staff with disabilities.

Cash Limits

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if there are any proposals to change the 1992-93 cash limit for the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service.

Mr. Waldegrave: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate the cash limit for the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service—class XIX, vote 1—will be increased by £436,000 from £38,023,000 to £38,459,000. The Department's running costs limit will be increased by £3,759,000 from £45,339,000 to £49,098,000.

The increase is required to reflect the machinery of government changes announced after the general election and to cover the increased costs of physical security. The latter will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Executive Agencies

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what targets have been set for his Department's executive agencies in 1992-93.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Cabinet Office (Office of the Minister for the Civil Service) has three executive agencies; the Civil Service college, the Civil Service Occupational Health Service and Recruitment and Assessment Services. The primary target for each agency is to cover its costs in trading terms from income. In addition, the following key targets have been set for each agency in 1992-93.

Civil Service College

(i) To earn £157,000 from consultancy.
(ii) To attract amongst the students from the Civil Service —6,050 at Grade 7 or above, and 2,400 below Grade 7 who are in development schemes.
(iii) To attract 2,100 students for externally validated qualifications.
(iv) To attract 550 students from the private sector.
(v) To earn 79 per cent. of course evaluations in the two highest categories.

There is also a value-for-money target whereby the rating of college services as revealed by a detailed survey of the views of students must increase over the five-year period to 1995 by 10 per cent. more than the real cost of the college's output.

Civil Service Occupational Health Service

(i) To achieve a cost per productive professional day (including administrative and overhead costs) of £267 or less.
(ii) To achieve an average cost per case referral of £24 or less.
(iii) To earn 78 per cent. of customer post-service evaluations in the two highest categories.
(iv) To turn round within 40 days 65 per cent. of case referrals where additional information is sougth and within 15 days 87 per cent. of referrals where no additional information is sought.

Recruitment and Assessment Services

(i) To achieve volumes of business of 470 comprehensive recruitment schemes, 180 partial recruitment schemes and 1,000 consultancy days.
(ii) To achieve income of £565,000 from the sale and marketing of biodata and tests, £160,000 from publicity services and £60,000 from 'Helpline' and related ad hoc services.
(iii) To increase productivity by 15 per cent. over forecast 1991-92 levels.
(iv) To improve the quality of service to recruitment customers and achieve the following ratings in customer sign off reports—Overall satisfaction 86 per cent.—Administration 81 per cent.

ENVIRONMENT

Competitive Training

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which responsibilities have been transferred from the Department of the Environment to the Department of National Heritage in relation to compulsory competitive tendering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Responsibility for sport, including policy on compulsory competitive tendering for the management of sports and leisure facilities, was transferred from my Department to the Department of Education and Science in November 1990, and thence to the Department of National Heritage when it was established, in April 1992. My Department retains responsibility for compulsory competitive tendering generally and for implementation of the relevant legislation.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and if he will give an estimate for 1992-93;

(2) if he will give separate figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his latest estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Howard: The information in respect of paid publicity and associated staff costs for my Department (including agencies) is:

	£ million
1985-86	3·5
1986-87	4·2
1987-88	4·8
1988-89	6·9
1989-90	31·5
1990-91	7·5
1991-92	8·1
1992-93	[1]17·7

[1] Estimate.

Expenditure is not broken down between different publicity media. Information relating to financial years 1979-80 to 1984-85 inclusive is not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the English local authorities in receipt of part of the £15 million allocation of supplementary credit approvals for recycling investment during 1992-93 and the total amount allocated to each authority.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is set out in the table:

Authority	*Amount £'000*
London authorities	
Camden	177·365
Croydon	180·000
Ealing	460·000
Greenwich	86·000
Hammersmith and Fulham	86·000
Haringey	18·000
Havering	11·000
Hounslow	80·861
Kingston upon Thames	13·000
Lambeth	20·000
Merton	50·000
North London Waste Authority	600·000
Richmond upon Thames	40·000

Authority	Amount £'000
Southwark	78·000
Sutton	183·000
Waltham Forest	162·000
Metropolitan Authorities	
Barnsley	65·000
Bolton	25·000
Calderdale	25·500
Doncaster	67·000
Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority	90·000
Kirklees	10·700
Leeds	1,412·000
Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority	85·000
Newcastle upon Tyne	160·000
North Tyneside	10·000
Salford	12·000
South Tyneside	24·420
Sunderland	10·000
Wakefield	44·000
Walsall	95·000
West Yorkshire Waste Management Joint Committee	979·000
Wolverhampton	155·500
County Councils	
Berkshire	20·000
Cambridgeshire	181·000
Cheshire	225·000
Cornwall	254·000
Devon	215·000
Durham	100·000
Gloucestershire	95·000
Hampshire	430·000
Hereford and Worcester	55·000
Humberside	40·000
Leicestershire	320·000
Norfolk	80·000
North Yorkshire	74·000
Oxfordshire	400·000
Somerset	54·000
Staffordshire	5·500
Suffolk	15·000
District Councils	
Adur	430·000
Allerdale	30·000
Alnwick	3·000
Arun	10·000
Bassetlaw	6·500
Bath	17·000
Blaby	7·500
Bolsover	30·000
Bracknell Forest	150·000
Braintree	15·000
Brighton	115·000
Bristol	185·000
Broxbourne	40·000
Burnley	40·000
Carlisle	19·000
Castle Morpeth	60·000
Castle Point	12·000
Chelmsford	12·000
Cherwell	6·000
Chesterfield	7·400
Copeland	35·000
Cotswold	60·000
Darlington	12·000
Derby	50·000
East Hampshire	70·000
East Yorkshire	10·000
Ellesmere Port and Neston	5·000
Exeter	15·000
Gedling	31·000
Guildford	75·000
Harborough	6·000
Harrogate	21·750
Hartlepool	148·000
Hastings	55·000
Hinckley and Bosworth	45·000
Isles of Scilly	41·500
Leicester	65·000
Lewes	110·000
Luton	56·000
Malvern Hills	38·000
Melton	42·000
Mid Devon	4·200
Mid Suffolk	24·000
Milton Keynes	2000·000
Newark and Sherwood	25·000
Northavon	55·000
North Dorset	4·000
North East Derbyshire	45·000
North Hertfordshire	6·030
Norwich	199·000
Nottingham	149·700
Nuneaton and Bedworth	8·000
Oxford	110·000
Plymouth	45·000
Reading	43·000
Restormel	58·000
Rother	35·000
Rushmoor	16·000
Ryedale	76·000
St. Albans	120·000
Scarborough	88·000
Scunthorpe	78·500
South Derbyshire	32·000
South Somerset	176·000
Test Valley	262·680
Tewkesbury	18·000
Thurrock	14·000
Tonbridge and Malling	152·800
Waverley	15·000
Wealden	600·000
West Dorest	48·000
Woking	107·000
Wokingham	16·700
Wrekin, The	94·000
Wycombe	5·000

New Housing

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to enable local authorities to play a more active role in the facilitation of the building of new homes by housing associations.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has recently issued a consultation paper which includes proposals aimed at co-ordinating decisions on the initial allocations of Housing Corporation funding with local authorities' housing strategies. The paper builds on authorities' role as enablers, which involves facilitating the development of social housing by housing associations or other providers, for example by the use of planning powers, or by providing land for housing. It proposes a framework for discussions on housing needs, and the allocation of resources to meet these needs. These discussions will involve housing authorities; the regional offices of the Housing Corporation, who are the main providers of public funding for new social housing; and the regional offices of my Department.

Copies of the consultation paper, which is entitled "The Development of the Local Authority Housing Investment Programme Process", are in the Library; responses are invited by 26 June.

Coastal and Marine Planning

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans have been made to establish a governmental body responsible for the strategic and co-ordinated approach to the planning and regulation of activities in the coastal and marine environment.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke North on 14 May [*Official Report*, column 197].

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will re-establish grants for energy conservation in the domestic sector.

Mr. Maclean: The Department provides grants to householders on low incomes for energy efficiency measures through the home energy efficiency scheme. Finance to encourage energy efficiency measures in housing is also made available through house renovation grants and minor works assistance, local authorities' council housing repair and improvement programmes, the green house demonstration programme and estate action.

The Energy Savings Trust announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 13 May *Official Report*, column 136, is also expected to make grants available to improve energy efficiency.

Separate arrangements for grants to householders on low incomes for energy efficiency measures apply in Northern Ireland and are administered by the Department of Economic Development.

Opencast Mining, Baddesley Ensor

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the report of the public inquiry into the application for an opencast coal mine at Baddesley Ensor in north Warwickshire to be published.

Mr. Baldry: The inspector's report is being considered, and will be published as soon as a decision has been issued. I shall ensure that the hon. Member is sent a copy at the same time.

Ozone-destroying Chemicals

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that the production of all ozone-destroying chemicals such as CFCs, HFCs, methyl chloroform, carbon tetrachloride and halons will be stopped; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Montreal Protocol, which phases out the production and supply of CFCs, halons, carbon tetrachloride and methyl chloroform, will be reviewed in November. The United Kingdom is co-chairing the official level negotiations towards that review. The United Kingdom Government and the EC are committed to phasing out these substances by the end of 1995 at the latest and are urging other parties to the protocol to do the same. Both United Kingdom CFC producers will cease production no later than that date. HFCs do not deplete ozone and cannot, therefore be controlled by the protocol.

Council Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to start publication of council tax property valuations so that appeals can begin; and what pattern publication will follow.

Mr. Robin Squire: Valuation lists for all billing authorities will be compiled at 1 April 1993 and will be deposited at the billing authority's principal office for public inspection, as well as being available at the local valuation office. Taxpayers who wish to appeal will be able to do so after 1 April 1993.

The first council tax bills will include a notification of the band of the property. Occupiers of those properties which are exempt from the tax and who therefore would not receive a bill will be sent a separate notification of the band of the property.

Draft lists will be provided to billing authorities between 15 November and 1 December 1992 and will also be available for public inspection.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of homes have been valued by estate agents for the new council tax; when the operation will be completed; what is his estimate of the total cost; and how much of this cost will be borne by central Government.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Valuation Office Agency have contracted private sector valuers to assist them with the valuation of 57 per cent. of homes in England. The contracts required the work to be completed by 31 May 1992. The cost of the contracts in England is under £18 million, entirely borne by central Government.

Cash Limits

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits and running costs limits for 1992-93.

Mr. Howard: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, I propose to make the following changes;

(i) the cash limit for Class VIII, Vote 5 (central environmental services etc.) will be reduced by £659,000 from £315,931,000 to £315,272,000, to enable £660,000 of additional resources to be transferred to Class VIII, Vote 8 for research by her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

(ii) the running cost limit for Class VIII, Vote 7 (Property Holdings and Central Support Services) will be reduced by £8,643,000 from £56,844,000 to £48,201,000. This is as a result of the transfer of administration costs to Class VIII, Vote 8 in respect of a part of the Directorate of Central Support Services which has been absorbed into the Department's Construction Directorate and the transfer of administration costs of Parliamentary Works staff to the House of Commons and House of Lords' Votes.

(iii) the cash limit for Class VIII, Vote 9 (Revenue Support Grant, payments of non-domestic rates, Valuation Offices services, etc. England) will be increased by £56,500,000 from £29,473,833,000 to £29,530,333,000. The increase will provide for payments of additional grant for local education authorities in respect of the extra costs associated with the teachers' pay award, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 10 February.

As the result of these and other changes the Department's running cost limit has been increased by £500,000 from £201,116,000 to £201,616,000.

All the above changes are either claims on the Reserve or are offset elsewhere and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Council Tax

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to lay the special grant report covering the payment of grant for the costs of preparing for the council tax.

Mr. Howard: I have today laid before the House the special grant report which provides details of the grant I propose to pay to billing authorities for their revenue costs in preparing for the council tax. The amount of grant is £85·975 million. This grant will help authorities in the smooth implementation of the council tax.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to make any change to the running cost limit on PSA Services Vote in 1992-93.

Mr. Robin Squire: Subject to Parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the running cost limit for Class VIII, Vote 12 will be reduced by £33,748,000 from £50,195,000 to £16,447,000 mainly due to the re-ordering of appropriation in aid provision between certain subheads to reflect a better classification of receipts.

Waveney district council

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has decided to take against Waveney district council following the issue of a notice under part I of the Local Government Act 1988 on 24 July 1991 in respect of building cleaning work.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has given careful consideration the response which Waveney district council has made to the notice served on the authority on 24 July 1991, and has today given a direction under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988 in respect of their building cleaning work. The effect of this direction is to preclude the authority from carrying out building cleaning work after 31 March 1993.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* those authorities whose expenditure servicing capital exceeds the relevant forecast standard spending assessment for the year 1991-92, stating for each that figure, the amount actually spent and the deficit as a percentage of that sum and *(b)* a second, or integrated, list of those authorities likely to be in that category for the year 1992-93 together with the relevant standard spending assessment estimated expenditure and percentage deficit.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 14 May 1992]:* The information requested for 1991-92 has been placed in the Library. It is not yet possible to produce comparable figures for 1992-93.

Mortgage Rescue Schemes

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *238-39*, if he will make a statement following his meeting with the Council of Mortgage Lenders on 2 June; and what is his latest estimate of the number of households *(a)* assisted to date and *(b)* likely to be assisted in the whole of 1992 by mortgage rescue schemes initiated by members of the Council of Mortgage Lenders as part of the package agreed in December 1991.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 3 June 1992]:* Ministers met mortgage lenders yesterday to review progress on tackling repossessions. They were encouraged to hear the lenders' assessment that repossessions in 1992 will be significantly lower than they would have been without the package of measures announced by the Chancellor last December.

The Council of Mortgage Lenders estimates that measures taken since December will save some 55,000 repossessions this year: 40,000 as a result of new procedures for dealing with arrears cases; and 15,000 as a result of the direct payment to lenders of the mortgage interest element of income support.

The Government welcome the lenders' recognition that further efforts are necessary to tackle the arrears and repossessions problem. It agrees that lenders should continue to look at the whole range of options available for addressing this problem, including formal mortgage to rent schemes, shared equity arrangements and more generous repayment terms.

The Government continue to regard the level of repossessions as an important issue and will follow closely the progress lenders are making in tackling it.

WALES

Revenue Support Grant

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to make a statement concerning the provisional revenue support grant for the year 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave on 22 May to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) at column *277*.

Block Release

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females were on day or block release in Wales in the latest year for which figures are available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Figures for higher education corporations, voluntary colleges, and further education institutions maintained by local education authorities are given in the following table for the year 1990-91. Comparable information is not available for the University of Wales as students on part-time courses are not enrolled as day release or block release.

Students enrolled on part-time day/block release courses

	Number
Males	19,121
Females	8,054

Child Care

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of *(a)* up to two year-olds and *(b)* over three year-olds are currently in publicly-funded child care places in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information held centrally relates to children under 5. The numbers of publicly funded child care places in Wales at 31 March 1991 are shown in the following table:

	Full day care	*Sessional care*
Provided by the local authority	275	275
Children in private or voluntary facilities paid for by the local authority	211	731
	486	1,006
Rate per 1,000 population aged 0-4	2·5	5·3

Queensferry School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has under the heading of capital allocations to enable the replacement of Queensferry county primary school, Deeside, Clwyd, to be built by the 1993-94 financial year.

Mr. David Hunt: The statutory responsibility for the provision, repair and maintenance of school buildings rests with the local education authority. It is for Clwyd county council to determine its own priorities for capital spending between the various services from within the resources at its disposal as well as on the projects within those services in the light of its own assessment of needs.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will visit Queensferry county primary school;

(2) if he will meet the staff and governors of Queensferry county primary school;

(3) if he will meet the parent teacher association of Queensferry county primary school.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no present plans to do so.

Council Tax

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce his proposals for the payment of grant in respect of council tax preparation costs incurred by billing authorities in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today laid before the House the special grant report for 1992-93 which sets out my proposals for the payment of grant towards the revenue cost of implementing the council tax. The report sets out grant allocations to individual billing authorities and the conditions that I intend to impose on the payment of grant. A copy of the report is being sent to all local authorities in Wales today.

I have also made credit approvals available to billing authorities to cover the estimated capital cost of preparation work.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether any changes will be made to the cash limits of his Department in 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limit for class XVI, vote 8 will be increased by £5,447,000, from £1,265,078,000 to £1,270,525,000.

This increase allows for an additional £4,941,000 to help provide, from 1 April 1992, for the pay awards recommended by the Reports of the review bodies for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine, and on doctors' and dentists' remuneration, as announced on 10 February 1992. The increase also covers a transfer of £506,000 from class XIII, vote 1 for the cost of Welsh patients treated in spinal injury units.

The £4,941,000 for the pay awards recommendations will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Career Development Loans

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales the total amount of money which has been allocated in career development loans in Wales in the latest year for which figures are available; and how much has been allocated to *(a)* males and *(b)* females.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply. The total value of the loans issued in Wales during the year ending 31 March 1992 was £1,048,280—£655,156 for males and £393,124 for females.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Promotional Material

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what colours were used on the Industrial Development Board's promotional material in the May edition of the German magazine, "Automobil Produktion"; what is his policy on using the colours of the Republic of Ireland's flag in such material; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Due to a mistake admitted by the German publisher, the colours orange, white and green were used in the IDB's promotional supplement in the German automotive magazine. Fewer than 40 copies of the magazine were distributed, and the publisher has undertaken to remove the colours and reprint the supplement at his own expense before general circulation to the German automotive industry. It is not the policy of the IDB to use the national colours of the Republic of Ireland in any of its promotional literature.

Anglo-Irish Secretariat

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the Anglo-Irish secretariat at Maryfield is operational during the present inter-party talks at Stormont; what is its function; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The British and Irish Governments announced at an Intergovernmental

Conference on 27 April that no further meetings of the conference would be held before the week beginning 27 July. As envisaged in the statement of 26 March 1991, the secretariat at Maryfield is accordingly not required for that period to discharge its normal role of servicing conference meetings provided for in article 3 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and is not doing so.

Compensation Agency

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when a business plan for the Compensation Agency will be published.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Compensation Agency's business plan for 1992-93 will be published today. The plan explains the agency's business and organisation and sets out assumptions about work loads and resources which underpin the plans and targets identified for the agency this year. I have made arrangements for copies to be placed in the library.

Emergency Provisions Act

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects Lord Colville's report on the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 to be available.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses today.

Consultants Fees

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total sum paid out in fees by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and in each following year up to and including 1991-92; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Mates: The information for 1979-80 to 1983-84 is only available at disproportionate cost. Information for the years 1984-85 onwards is as follows:

	£
1984-85	2,352,311
1985-86	2,427,200
1986-87	2,742,192
1987-88	3,363,213
1988-89	4,260,116
1989-90	4,835,757
1990-91	4,239,223
1991-92	4,246,115
1992-93	[1]5,368,383

[1] Estimate.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims have been made for disability living allowances and attendance allowance for each month since February.

Mr. Scott: The latest available figures for claims[1] registered for disability living allowance were:

	Number
February	72,407
March	123,985
April	67,888
TOTAL	264,280

[1] These numbers include new claims, "top-up" claims from existing recipients of attendance allowance and mobility allowance and claims made on the grounds of terminal illness.

The latest available figures for claims received for attendance allowance were:

	Number
February	59,871
March	71,084
April	51,816
TOTAL	182,771

Benefit Claims

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for social fund loans in the London borough of Lambeth were refused on the grounds of inability to pay; and if he will show this figure as a percentage of all applications for loans in Lambeth.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Respite Care

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will undertake a survey to discover the number of people who are in receipt of respite care.

Mr. Burt: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 15 May at columns *223-24*. As no distinction is made in the level of income support paid between temporary and permanent residence in a residential care or nursing home, there would be no advantage for social security purposes in collecting such data and it would not justify the cost involved.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide further assistance to citizens advice bureaux to enable the staff to deal with applications for disability living allowance and attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: We have worked closely with the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and other organisations of and for disabled people on the introduction of disability living allowance and disability working allowance and the new claims process for attendance allowance. As part of our continuing commitment to help staff in citizens advice bureaux provide advice and information, we have offered suggestions on the training material and guidance NACAB issued to all its CABs and provided them with free copies of the disability handbook, as well as arranging for every individual citizens advice bureaux to hold stocks of the claim packs. We have also helped to fund the purchase of the Sweet and Maxwell guide on the new disability benefits.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take such action as necessary to simplify forms DLA 1(A) and DLA 2(A) relating to disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The introduction of the new claims process for disability living allowance has been widely welcomed by disabled people and their organisations. Indeed, they were both closely involved in developing and testing the claim pack DLA 1(A). Nevertheless, we are closely monitoring the effectiveness of the claim pack and are currently undertaking a review of the current draft and are making improvements where necessary to ensure that it continues to be as user-friendly as possible.

Correspondence

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Birkenhead on behalf of his constituent Mr. M. Ritchie of 11 Highfield crescent, Birkenhead, on his claim for mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: There is no record of any correspondence from the hon. Member to Ministers concerning his constituent's claim. However, I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the hon. Member recently wrote direct to the mobility allowance unit concerning this matter, and a reply was sent to him on 1 June 1992.

European Senior's Pass

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made towards securing agreement across EC member states on the adoption of the European senior's pass.

Miss Widdecombe: It has not yet been possible to secure Communitywide agreement to the adoption of the EC over, 60s card. No member state has yet implemented the card and officials are continuing their discussions with their counterparts in the Commission and other member states in an effort to resolve outstanding problems.

Pensioners Living Overseas

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what recent discussions have been held between officials from his Department and representatives of the Australian Government concerning the uprating of pensions paid to British pensioners residing in Australia;

(2) if he will make a statement on the recent meetings held in Canberra between representatives of the Australian Government, and officials from his Department on arrangements for the payment of pensions to British pensioners residing in Australia.

Miss Widdecombe: Officials of the Department met their counterparts from the Australian Department of Social Security in October 1991 and in March 1992 to discuss issues relating to pensions paid to United Kingdom pensioners living in Australia. In view of the substantial costs involved, the Government are unable to make any commitment, at this stage, to change their policy of not uprating pensions paid to British pensioners living in Australia.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's policy on the payment of pensions to British pensioners living overseas in countries with which there is no reciprocal social security agreement.

Miss Widdecombe: British pensioners living abroad in countries, outside the European Community, with which the United Kingdom does not have a reciprocal social security agreement providing for annual upratings of benefit receive their state retirement pensions at the rate current when they left this country or when they became entitled if they were living abroad at the time.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claims for attendance allowance on grounds of terminal illness were received in the first three months of 1992; how many of these claims are still outstanding; what was the average length of time taken to process successful claims; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many claims for attendance allowance were received in the first three months of 1992; how many of these claims are still outstanding; what was the average length of time taken to process successful claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Pursuant to my reply of 12 May, at column *100*, I regret that the following information was incorrect:

A total of 164,412 claims for attendance allowance were received in the first three months of this year. The number of these claims made on the grounds of terminal illness is not available.

The correct information is as follows:

A total of 185,596 claims for attendance allowance were received in the first three months of this year. The number of these claims made on the grounds of terminal illness is 21,184.

EDUCATION

Voluntary-aided Schools

Mr. Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many applications for voluntary-aided status have been received from *(a)* Anglican schools, *(b)* Catholic schools, *(c)* Jewish schools and *(d)* Muslim schools since 1979; and how many applications in each category have been granted.

Mr. Forth: The complete information requested is not readily available. The following table gives the information requested in respect of applications decided since November 1988 and includes one lapsed application in respect of a Muslim school. This excludes schools formed by the amalgamation of existing voluntary schools.

	Number of applications	*Number approved*
Church of England	6	2
Church of England/Methodist	2	1
Roman Catholic	7	4
Jewish	4	2
Muslim	2	0

School Governors

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what efforts are being undertaken by his Department to ensure that women are granted adequate training and have equality of access to be selected as school governors.

Mr. Forth: Women have equal opportunity to become school governors and the majority of school governors —53 per cent.—are women. The same training opportunities are open to all governors.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to establish mechanisms to ensure that equal opportunities issues are taken into account as part of the school inspection strategy.

Mr. Forth: The detailed arrangements for school inspections under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 will be a matter for Her Majesty's chief inspectors for schools.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many full-time equivalent academic staff are employed at *(a)* each institution funded by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and *(b)* each institution funded by the Universities Funding Council; and how many students are enrolled at each.

Mr. Forman: Numbers of full-time equivalent academic staff and students in each institution funded by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council are given in table G6 of the "Annual Monitoring Survey of Further and Higher Education Student:Staff Ratios—Academic Year 1989-90—Interim Report" published by the Department of Education and Science and lodged in the Library.

Numbers of full-time and part-time academic staff and students in each institution funded by the Universities Funding Council are given in tables 14, 15 and 31 of "University Statistics 1989-90—Volume One: Students and Staff" published by the Universities' Statistical Record and lodged in the Library.

Polytechnic Staff

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the percentage change in real terms of the salaries of academic staff in polytechnics between 1979 and 1991.

Mr. Forman: The percentage change in real terms of the salaries of academic staff in polytechnics between 1979 and 1990 was 24·2 per cent. Information for 1991 is not yet available.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many full-time staff there were in institutions funded by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, or its earlier equivalent, in 1979 and at the last count.

Mr. Forman: The Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council annual record of staff and students shows that 58,283 full-time equivalent staff were in institutions funded by the council in academic year 1990-91, the latest year for which data are available.

The PCFC was established in 1989. Comparable data for 1979 are not available for the institutions currently funded by the PCFC.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he has any changes to announce to cash limits on Votes within his responsibility for 1992-93.

Mr. Patten: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XI, vote 1, Schools, research and miscellaneous services, will be increased by £50,000 from £766,485,000 to £766,535,000.

The increase represents the transfer from the Home Office of £50,000 from the Government seized assets fund for educational projects in connection with drug abuse. The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

European Council

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the outcome of the meeting of the EC Education Ministers in Luxembourg on Monday 1 June.

Mr. Patten: I attended the meeting on Monday 1 June of the Council and the Ministers for Education meeting within the Council, together with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Higher Education. The Council and the Ministers adopted conclusions on the development of environmental education and open and distance learning; and the Council adopted conclusions on the evaluation of future Community programmes concerning education and training. The Council and the Ministers discussed issues arising from the implementation of the LINGUA programme and the proposed amendment of the convention defining the statute of the European schools.

HEALTH

Home Helps

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the provisions obliging local authority social services departments to provide home help services to all elderly people in their area who are in need of such services.

Mr. Yeo: The statutory basis for the provision of home help service to elderly people is contained in the following legislation:

Section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948;

Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970;

Section 45 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968;

Section 21 and Schedule 8 of the National Health Service Act 1977.

Dentists

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) on 12 May, *Official Report*, column *85*, whether the Health Department and the general dental services committee have now reconsidered the appropriate fee scale for 1992-93; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold), on 2 June at columns *466-67*.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any changes will be made to the cash limits and running cost limit of her Department in 1992-93.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

The cash limit for class XIII, vote 1 (hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, England) will be increased by £20,190,000 (from £18,544,309,000 to £18,564,499,000). This increase allows for an additional £76,258,000 to help provide, from 1 April 1992, for the pay awards recommended by the reports of the review bodies for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine, and on doctors' and dentists' remuneration, as announced on 10 February 1992. This is partly offset by transfers of £49,562,000 to class XIII, vote 4, (family health services (part) and NHS trusts' external financing etc., England), reflecting an increase in the NHS trusts' aggregate external financing limit; £6,000,000 to class XIII, vote 3 (see below) for payments to and on behalf of recipients of blood and tissue infected with HIV and £506,000 to class XVI, vote 8 (hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, Wales) for Welsh patients treated in spinal injury units. The remainder will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The cash limit for class XIII, vote 3 (Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England) will be increased by £21,428,000 (from £801,053,000 to £822,481,000). These increases provide for £14,936,000 for the Department's London accommodation strategy; £742,000 to meet, from 1 April 1992, the review body recommendations mentioned above and £6,000,000 from class XIII, vote 1 for payments to and on behalf of recipients of blood and tissue infected with HIV. These are partly offset by a transfer of £250,000 to the Department of Social Security national insurance fund for the Stillbirth (Definition) Bill, while the remainder will be charged to the reserve.

The Department's gross running cost limit control is increased by £1,851,000 from £267,385,000 to £269,236,000.

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has any changes to announce to the running cost limit for the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the running cost limit for class XIII, vote 6 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys) will be increased by £261,000 from £45,741,000 to £46,002,000. This reflects an increase in running costs provision of £96,000 in the national health central register area for additional services to the family health service central unit, and £165,000 for the childhood cancer birth linkage study. The increases will be matched by an increase in appropriations in aid and will be met from within the existing resources of the Department of Health (class XIII, vote 3).

HOME DEPARTMENT

Offences (Statistics)

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences were recorded in the latest year for which figures are available, by people who were on bail at the time those offences were committed.

Mr. Jack: The information as requested is not available. The Home Office is discussing with the police, through the ACPO crime committee, how best to ensure the regular collection of data from police forces on offences committed by people on bail. Home Office research and planning unit paper 65 "Offending while on bail: a survey of recent studies", which is in the Library, gives estimates of the rate of offending by people on bail and of the number of offences committed.

Immigration

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress which Her Majesty's Government hope to make, and the goals which they hope to achieve, during their presidency of the European Communities, as regards the work programme on migration policy set out in the report from the Ministers responsible for immigration to the European Council meeting in Maastricht on immigration and asylum policy dated 3 December 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We are fully committed to carrying forward the work programme during the United Kingdom presidency, and are currently considering to what aspects of it we should give priority. We will reach final decisions in the light of the ministerial discussions at the conclusion of the Portuguese presidency.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made so far under the Portuguese presidency of the European Communities as regards the work programme on migration policy set out in the report from Ministers responsible for immigration to the European Council meeting on immigration and asylum policy on 3 December 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Discussions have been held under the Portuguese presidency on a number of matters which are included in the work programme adopted by EC Ministers concerned with immigration in December 1991 and subsequently approved by the European Council.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Her Majesty's Government intend to sign the convention applying the Schengen agreement of 14 June 1985 between the governments of the states of the Benelux economic union, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the French Republic on the gradual abolition of checks at their common borders.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No.

Departmental Expenditure

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for changes to his Department's running costs limits.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: To reflect a number of machinery of government changes affecting my Department, the Home Office running costs limit will be reduced by £588,000, from £1,450,608,000 to £1,450,020,000.

Young Offenders

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the number of *(a)* juveniles and *(b)* young adult offenders in Feltham young offenders institution who, at the end of the week ending 1 May 1992, had been on remand for *(a)* more than three months, *(b)* more than six months and *(c)* more than one year;

(2) how many *(a)* juveniles and *(b)* young adult offenders in Feltham young offenders institution on the latest date for which figures are available had been on remand for (i) between one and two weeks, (ii) between two weeks and one month, (iii) between one and three months, (iv) between three and six months, (v) between six and nine months, (vi) between nine months and one year and (vii) over one year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 13 May 1992]:* The information requested is not recorded centrally. The latest readily available information is for 31 March 1992 and is given in the table.

Untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners aged under 21 held in Feltham on 31 March 1992: by age group and length of time since first reception into a Prison Service establishment[1]

Number of prisoners[2]

Length of time since first remand into a Prison Service establishment	*Initial remand into Prison Service establishment: Feltham: Aged under 17*	*Feltham: Aged 17 and under 21*	*Other*[3]*: Aged under 17*	*Other*[3]*: Aged 17 and under 21*
Up to 1 week	5	35	—	—
Over 1 up to 2 weeks	—	34	—	—
Over 2 weeks up to 1 month	1	57	—	2
Over 1 up to 3 months	1	92	3	5
Over 3 up to 6 months	4	58	—	4
Over 6 up to 9 months	—	6	—	—
Over 9 months up to 1 year	—	3	—	1
Over 1 year	—	3	—	1
All lengths	11	288	3	13

[1] This includes any intervening time spent on bail, but excludes any time spent in police cells beforehand.
[2] Provisional figures.
[3] Those initially remanded to another establishment.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* juveniles and *(b)* young adult offenders had been held on remand in custody in England and Wales on the latest date for which figures are available for (i) over three months, (ii) over six months and (iii) over one year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 13 May 1992]:* The information requested is not recorded centrally. The latest readily available information is given in the table.

Untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners aged under 21 held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 31 March 1992: by age group and length of time since first reception into a Prison Service establishment[1]

Number of prisoners[2]

Length of time since first remand into a Prison Service establishment	*Aged under 17*	*Aged 17 and under 21*
Up to 3 months	67	1,977
Over 3 up to 6 months	18	513
Over 6 months up to 1 year	2	113
Over 1 year	—	31
All lengths	87	2,634

[1] This includes any intervening time spent on bail, but excludes any time spent in police cells beforehand.
[2] Provisional figures.

Prostitution

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prosecutions for soliciting for immoral purposes were issued in the Portswood division of the Hampshire Constabulary in 1990 and 1991; how many were successful; and what was the average fine;

(2) how many cautions for kerb crawling were successfully undertaken by the Portswood division of the Hampshire Constabulary in 1990 and in 1991; and how many were issued to people living *(a)* in the city of Southampton, *(b)* the rest of Hampshire and *(c)* other places;

(3) how many prosecutions for kerb crawling were successfully undertaken by the Portswood division of the Hampshire Constabulary in 1990 and 1991; and how many of those prosecuted lived in *(a)* the city of Southampton, *(b)* the rest of Hampshire and *(c)* other places.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* Information available centrally, relates only to the court proceedings for Southampton and other petty sessional divisions in Hampshire and to cautions for the whole of Hampshire police force area. Information for 1991 is not yet available.

No males were prosecuted for soliciting in Southampton petty sessional division in either 1989 or 1990. There was only one prosecution for kerb-crawling in 1989 and none in 1990. The person was acquitted.

Information on kerb crawling for Hampshire police force area and England and Wales is given in the attached table below.

Table
Number of males, prosecuted, found guilty and cautioned for kerb-crawling in Hampshire police force area and England and Wales, 1989 and 1990

Number of males

	Hampshire police force area	*England and Wales*
Prosecutions		
1989	2	992
1990	—	1,360
Convictions		
1989	1	891
1990	—	1,215
Cautions		
1989	—	243
1990	5	227

PRIME MINISTER

Friendly Fire Incident

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister how and when he discovered the names of the American pilots involved in the friendly fire incident in the Gulf war; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I do not know, nor do I believe it necessary for me to know, the names of the pilots.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if there are any proposals to change the 1992-93 running costs limit for the Cabinet Office: Other Services Vote.

The Prime Minister: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the running costs limit for the Cabinet Office: other services (class XIX, vote 2) will be reduced by £2,482,000 from £22,892,000 to £20,410,000. This reflects the machinery of government changes announced after the general election.

Dalai Lama

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to encourage the Chinese authorities to facilitate a visit by the Dalai Lama to Tibet; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* We continue to urge the Chinese Government to start a dialogue with the Tibetan people, including the Dalai Lama. We hope that such a dialogue would open the way for the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what efforts have been made by her Department to ensure equality of access to training programmes for both men and women.

Mr. McLoughlin: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) have a contractual requirement to ensure equality of opportunity in all their activities. TECs have flexibility to tailor training to meet individuals' needs in both content and delivery, both to ensure equality of opportunity and so that people may continue to meet their domestic commitments while training. Furthermore, they are required to pay necessary child care costs to those in the employment training and youth training guarantee groups.

Equality of training opportunity will be recognised and encouraged by a new national training award recently introduced to be awarded for the training of women.

Health and Safety Commission

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to ensure that the Health and Safety Commission produces bilingual leaflets and posters for mass distribution within Wales.

Mr. McLoughlin: Decisions on the publication of guidance on health and safety in languages other than English are for the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) and Health and Safety Executive (HSE). They are very conscious of the needs of Welsh speakers and are seeking to improve the services they provide to Welsh speakers in Wales.

A Welsh language version of the poster, "Health and Safety Law—What You Should Know", and three leaflets in the agricultural series are already available in Welsh.

The development of HSC's and HSE's policy on Welsh language will naturally take into account the measures to be enacted in the new Welsh Language Bill which was announced in the Queen's speech.

Employment Protection

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to extend equal employment protection to part-time workers and to institute pro rata benefits for women and men in part-time work.

Mr. McLoughlin: Many important rights—including those relating to sex and race discrimination, trade union membership/non-membership and health and safety—already apply equally to all employees, irrespective of hours of work. All union members also have important statutory protections against misuse of union powers. Extending all employment protection rights to employees regardless of their hours of work or on a pro rata basis, however, would place excessive burdens on employers and reduce opportunities for part-time work.

Women Workers

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being taken by her Department to encourage the employment of women returners.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is for women themselves to choose whether or not to return to work, but my colleagues and I take every opportunity to encourage employers to adopt working arrangements which allow all parents to balance their employment and family responsibilities. These include flexible hours and holidays, job sharing, career breaks, part-time working and, where appropriate, help with child care. Many employment service and training and enterprise council programmes have inbuilt flexibility which benefits women returners. Our commitment to encouraging more out of school and holiday child care schemes will particularly benefit women who wish to resume work when their children start school.

Equal Pay

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to ensure that the equal value regulations of the Equal Pay Act 1970 are implemented in full.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations 1983 have been fully in operation since 1 January 1984.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to revise the Equal Pay Act 1970 to ensure that women in sex-segregated industries are not prevented from benefiting from the Act.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Equal Pay Act 1970, as amended, provides that a woman who is employed on like work, work rated as equivalent under a job evaluation study, or work of equal value, to a man employed by the same or an associated employer is entitled to equality with him in the terms of her contract of employment. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to extend the scope of the Act in the way suggested.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to assist the pursuit of equal pay claims by women employees through taking steps to minimise the expenses incurred by the claimant and the delays in application.

Mr. McLoughlin: Industrial tribunals are intended to provide a cheap, speedy and relatively informal means of resolving disputes arising out of the employment relationship, including the Equal Pay Act. In consequence under part IV of the Legal Aid Act 1988, legal aid is not available for representation before industrial tribunals. However, according to an applicant's financial circumstances he or she may be able to obtain from a solicitor, without cost, legal advice and assistance with preparation of an application to an industrial tribunal.

The Equal Opportunities Commission has made a number of recommendations for changes to the Equal Pay Act 1970 some of which, the commission states, will reduce the time taken to deal with equal value applications. These recommendations are currently under consideration.

Equal Opportunities Commission

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to increase the funds allocated for political education purposes for the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no such plans. The Equal Opportunities Commission receives grant in aid from the Government to work toward the elimination of discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity between men and women generally, and to keep under review the working of the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average length of time spent by the chairmen of the training and enterprise councils in their posts; and if she will make a statement on the length of time she expects chairmen to serve.

Mr. McLoughlin: Less than one third of TECs have had a change of chairman since becoming operational. It would therefore be inappropriate at this stage to calculate an average length of time that individuals spend as TEC chairmen.

As long as an individual remains eligible for the position of TEC chairman, there is no present length of service expected.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, following the House of Lords decision in Delaney *v.* Staples, she will now introduce regulations to extend the jurisdiction of industrial tribunals.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 22 May 1992, *Official Report*, col. *347*.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether any changes will be made to her Department's cash limits or running costs limits for 1992-93.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the following changes will be made:

The running costs provision for class VI, vote 1 will be decreased by £1,378,000 from £329,474,000 to £328,096,000 changing the departmental running costs limits from £1,206,423,000 to £1,205,045,000. This change is the net effect of transfers to the Department of Trade and Industry (class IV, vote 2) and the Department of National Heritage (class XII, vote 4), and transfers from the Home Office (class IX, vote 3) and the Cabinet Office (class XIX, vote 2), reflecting the transfers of various responsibilities between these Departments and my own.

SCOTLAND

Quarry, Elderslie

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the proposal to develop a quarry at Windyhill farm, Elderslie.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The hon. Member wrote to my hon. Friend on this matter on 2 August 1991. A reply to that letter was sent on 21 August. No other representations have been made.

Council Tax

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends residences not fit for human habitation, as defined in Wylmac *v.* Community Charges Registration Officer, Strathclyde, to be subject to local council tax.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I intend to make an order shortly, under the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which will define those dwellings which will be exempt from the council tax. As far as dwellings such as that which was the subject of Wylmac *v.* Community Charges Registration Officer, Strathclyde, are concerned, it is our intention to exempt from the council tax those which would currently be exempt from the standard community charge.

Football Grounds

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there is to be a reconsideration of the present policy towards all-seated requirement at Scottish Football League grounds.

Mr. Lang: The Government keep under continual scrutiny the safety of sports grounds. In recent months, we have geen examining the all-seated requirement for those Scottish Football League clubs with grounds designated in terms of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 as being capable of holding more than 10,000 spectators.

We have decided that it would be wrong to review either the principle or the timetable for all-seated grounds in the

Scottish Premier League or at Hampden Park and Murrayfield. It is essential that those major Scottish grounds should be all-seated, bearing in mind the large attendance frequently attracted to those grounds. It is also essential that our top football clubs meet the all-seated standards necessary to compete in Europe and make full use of the resources available to them to provide grounds to a standard of which we can all be proud.

However, there may be circumstances in which standing accommodation can be retained at those first and second division grounds presently required to become all-seated, where average attendances are very low in relation to actual ground capacity. Representations will be invited shortly from a number of interested organisations in a review of all-seated policy for those grounds. No changes in policy will be made unless the Government are satisfied about the safety implications of allowing limited standing accommodation to remain at those smaller grounds.

I will make a further announcement as soon as possible.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to make any changes to the cash limits for 1992-93 within his responsibility.

Mr. Lang: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, I intend to make changes to three cash limits:

(a) The cash limit for class XV, vote 13: education, arts and libraries, Scotland, will be increased by £1,250,000 from £259,024,000 to £260,274,000. The increase in provision is required to fund further improvements to Hampden Park. This increase is offset by a reduction in the SO/LA2 cash block.

(b) The cash limit for class XV, vote 20, revenue and rate support grants, Scotland will be increased by £47,700,000 from £3,458,500,000 to £3,506,200,000. £41,000,000 of this increase in provision will fund an additional reduction in non-domestic rates poundages as a further step in the Government's united business rates policy. The remaining £6,700,000 is an increase to local authorities in Scotland following an addition to the amounts being distributed to local authorities in England and Wales.

(c) The cash limit for class XV, vote 25: hospital, community health, family health (part) and other health services, Scotland, will be increased by £10,800,000 from £2,590,645,000 to £2,601,445,000. The increase is required to provide £11,000,000 towards the costs of the pay awards recommended in the reports of the review bodies for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine, and on doctors' and dentists' remuneration (Cm. 1811, 1812 and 1813) and £1,800,000 to cover the costs of a scheme of payments for patients who contracted HIV through blood or tissue transfer. The increases are partially offset by a reduction of £2,000,000 in respect of rephasing of health board banking arrangements.

(d) In addition, the cash block SO/LA2, which covers net capital allocation to local authorities and new town net capital expenditure, will be reduced by £4,052,000 from £272,033,000 to £267,981,000. This will partly offset increases in other cash limits.

All the increases mentioned will be offset by savings or charged to the reserve and therefore will not increase the planned total of public expenditure.

Local Government Pensions

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average annual pension paid to retired local government officers in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* For the year ending 31 March 1991, the average annual pension, including increases in line with movements in the retail prices index, paid to retired local government officers under the local government superannuation scheme was £2,014. More up-to-date information from the local authorities which administer the pension scheme is not yet available.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade Marks

Mr. Mills: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when he will introduce legislation to implement the EC directive on trade marks;

(2) what representations he has received on the consequences of not introducing legislation to implement the EC directive on trade marks by the end of 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: My right hon. Friend has received various representations on the need to implement the EC directive on trade marks by primary legislation. Thirty letters were received last autumn and more recently Sir John M. Banham, the Director general of the CBI, Mr. Christopher Morcom QC and Mr. Richard C. Abnett, the President of the Institute of Trade Mark Agents wrote. However, as my hon. Friend is aware, pressure of parliamentary time made it impossible to include the Trade Marks Bill in the legislative programme set out in the Gracious Speech.

We are now reviewing the available options for implementing the EC directive. I am not yet in a position to make a statement.

Recycled Feedstock

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he intends to encourage greater procurement of tissue product using recycled feedstock by Government Departments and public bodies.

Mr. Leigh: The 1990 White Paper on the Environment —"This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200)—and the first year report (Cm 1655) affirmed the Government's commitment to favouring recycled products where they are available of adequate quality and where they represent value for money. This message was reinforced in the Government's environmental action guide for building and purchasing managers, which was published in August 1991. All Government Departments are looking to develop strategies to improve their environmental housekeeping by the end of 1992; this may well lead to further increases in the procurement of recycled products, including tissue products, by Government Departments.

Power Lines

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what guidance he has issued or discussions he has had with the electricity companies to limit deaths and injury to birds by overhead power lines;

(2) whether any specific guidance notes are issued for marking power lines that cross estuaries, creeks and wetland habitats.

Mr. Eggar: Electricity companies when formulating overhead power line proposals have a statutory duty towards the environment which includes taking account of any wildlife in the area concerned. Where consultation with local interests shows the possibility of danger to birds, the fitting of bird diverters may be agreed by the company or otherwise may be imposed as a condition if consent for the line is granted.

Marine VHF Radio

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many prosecutions there were in 1991 for unlicensed marine very high frequency sets.

Mr. Leigh: During 1991, seven people were prosecuted for the unlicensed use of marine very high frequency equipment.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number of officials and type of craft used by his Department to enforce very high frequency marine radio licences and the areas they cover.

Mr. Leigh: My Department's Radiocommunications Agency has 97 field officers deployed around the United Kingdom who are responsible for the enforcement of the Wireless Telegraphy Acts, including the licensing of marine very high frequency radio equipment. The officers have five rigid inflatable boats for this work.

Communications Agency

Mr. Fraser: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the terms of reference of the radio investigator service of the Communications Agency.

Mr. Leigh: The objective of my Department's Radiocommunications Agency's radio investigation service is to ensure that authorised radio users can operate without undue interference. The RIS priorities are to tackle interference which could endanger lives and to help those whose business operations are disrupted as a result of interference. After these priorities have been met, the RIS deals with other interference complaints.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Benign Energy Sources

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his latest estimate of the total investment planned to develop *(a)* coppicing and *(b)* other benign energy sources.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Trade and Industry new and renewable energy programme expects to invest £24·3 million in 1992-93, of which £2·6 million is directly attributable to biofuels, including £547,000 for work on short rotation arable coppice. Complementary work on miscanthus, another energy crop, costing £45,000, is being funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Relocation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many civil servants in his Department he is considering for relocation from headquarters buildings; and if he will list the areas currently under consideration for relocation.

Mr. Eggar: The Radiocommunications Agency of the DTI is currently considering the possibility of relocating 350 staff from its offices at Waterloo to docklands.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions have taken place with the trade unions in respect of relocation of civil servants from his Department's headquarters buildings.

Mr. Eggar: The trade union side has been consulted and kept informed about the progress of the Department's programme of relocation reviews. They have been closely involved in discussions about relocation and are currently involved in discussions with the Radiocommunications Agency about the planned move to docklands.

Telecommunications Act

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has yet received a report by the Director of Telecommunications for the year 1991 as required under section 55 of the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Mr. Heseltine: Yes. The eighth report by the Director General of Telecommunications is being published today. It covers the period 1 January to 31 December 1991. Copies of the report have been laid before each House of Parliament.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limit and running costs limit for 1992-93.

Mr. Heseltine: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class V, vote 3 (administration) will be increased by £32,000 from £43,263,000 to £43,295,000 in respect of a transfer for statistical surveys from the Central Statistical Office. The running cost limit for the Department of Trade and Industry will be increased by £40,719,000 from £264,643,000 to £305,362,000 being the total of the running costs amounts on class IV yote 2 and Class V vote 3 after machinery of government changes.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Sudan

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations or actions Her Majesty's Government have made or taken to stop the slaughter in the Sudan whether by terrorism or famine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are concerned at the continuing loss of life in Sudan.

We have been one of the main bilateral food aid donors to Sudan, providing over £46 million worth of emergency humanitarian assistance—both bilaterally and through the EC's emergency aid programme—since the present food crisis began in November 1990. This figure includes 71,000 tonnes of bilateral food aid. We have pledged a further 27,000 tonnes in response to this year's appeal by the UN special emergency programme for the Horn of Africa. We have also played a leading part in efforts by the international donor community to ensure that relief is effectively provided throughout the country.

We have regularly made our views on terrorism plain to the Sudanese Government, particularly in connection with the release from prison last year of those responsible for the Acropole Hotel bombing in 1988, in which five Britons died. We have also stressed that we would regard it as unacceptable if Sudan were to provide support for terrorist groups.

Bougainville

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards independence for Bougainville; and what help Her Majesty's Government are giving Bougainville in the aftermath of the damage to the environment by copper mining.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government regard Bougainville as an integral part of Papua New Guinea and views the Bougainville problem as an internal matter of Papua New Guinea. We are not aware that the Papua New Guinea Government is seeking any help from foreign governments in connection with copper mining on its territory.

Cambodia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance Her Majesty's Government is providing to Cambodia for its mine-clearing programme.

Mr. Goodlad: The UN transitional authority in Cambodia's mine clearance training unit is led by a British commander supported by 10 other personnel. The United Kingdom is also contributing financially to the mine clearance training programme through payment of our assessed contribution—6·1 per cent.—to the costs of UNTAC. We have given the HALO Trust, a British non-governmental organisation working in Cambodia, £60,000 to help its mine survey work in Cambodia on behalf of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

TRANSPORT

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the increase in carbon dioxide and oxides of nitrogen discharges to the atmosphere that would result in the United Kingdom from the upper projections of road traffic in his Department's White Paper "Roads to Prosperity".

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Forecasts of emissions of carbon dioxide and oxides of nitrogen from road traffic sources are currently being prepared and will be published in due course. The actual increases in emissions will depend on the success of the Government's policies to increase fuel efficiency and cut gaseous emissions as well as other factors such as economic growth, levels of road congestion and changing patterns of land use. Tigher controls on the amount of oxides of nitrogen which can be emitted by vehicles have been agreed in the European Community. There is also considerable scope for improving the fuel efficiency of vehicles, which will lower the emission of carbon dioxide. We are examining ways of encouraging improvements in fuel efficiency with our partners in the European Community.

Greater Manchester Relief Road

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when is his Department's preferred route for the M56 to M62 section of Greater Manchester western and northern relief road to be announced.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I cannot give a firm date. Preferred route announcement would follow consideration of the consultation response.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he intends to take to ensure that there will be no reduction in the quality or frequency of any rail service, subsequent to sale of any relevant part of the network to private operators.

Mr. Freeman: We will be announcing our proposals in due course. They will be directed towards improving services for passengers and freight customers.

Jubilee Line Extension

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate for the total cost of extending the Jubilee line.

Mr. Norris: The latest approved estimate of the total cost of extending the Jubilee line is £1·5 billion, at June 1990 prices.

Great Crested Newts

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what action he is taking to protect the population of great crested newts, Triturus Cristatus, at Bamfield, Cambridgeshire; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received from Dr. Clive Cummins relating to great crested newts; and what response he has sent.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Following receipt of Dr. Cummins' letter of 5 February 1992, consultants dealing with environmental issues arising from the upgrading of the A1 to motorway between Alconbury and Peterborough, were instructed to carry out further site investigation. They have confirmed that Barnfield pond, which is in the garden of a private house adjacent to the A1, contains a number of great crested newts. English Nature will now be consulted before deciding appropriate action. A reply to Dr. Cummins' further letter of 14 May 1992 will be sent shortly.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been expended by his Department in the London Docklands development corporation area from the date of its inception until the end of the last financial year.

Mr. Norris: The Department's capital expenditure in docklands between these dates was as follows:

	£ million
Docklands light railway	229·5
Improvements on the A13	14·5

Relocation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many civil servants in his Department he is considering for relocation from headquarters buildings; and if he will list the areas currently under consideration for relocation.

Mr. MacGregor: Up to 50 posts in the Department's London docklands division will move to docklands shortly, about 220 central services posts will move to Hastings by April 1993 and 250 marine directorate posts will move to Southampton in May 1993.

A review of the case for relocating from London over 500 posts in the highways, safety and traffic command is in progress; and consultants will be reporting on the Department's headquarters accommodation needs and options for meeting them. Decisions about future accommodation requirements and locations will be taken after the completion of these studies later this year.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions have taken place with the trades unions in respect of relocation of civil servants from his Department's headquarters buildings.

Mr. MacGregor: Officials have twice met the Department of Transport's trade union side—TUS—to discuss headquarters accommodation and relocation following the decision to demolish 2 Marsham street. The TUS was consulted about the draft terms of reference for a study by consultants of future accommodation needs in London and options.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Energy Efficiency

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce fiscal instruments to encourage energy-efficient investments.

Mr. Dorrell: The existing tax regime already gives relief for capital investment by businesses on equipment, including energy efficient products. By providing a broadly neutral tax system for businesses, with a common rate of capital allowances for investment in equipment, we allow businesses to decide where their money is best spent. Fuel savings provide the best incentive for businesses to make energy-efficient investments.

Cash Limits

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether there will be any changes to the Treasury's running costs limits in 1992-93.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury's running costs limit for 1992-93 is being increased by £1,290,000 from £90,913,000 to £92,203,000. This increase reflects the net effect of staff and functions transferred to the Treasury from the Department of Trade and Industry, and from the Treasury to the Cabinet Office—OPPS. This change will be reflected in a token supplementary estimate which will be presented for parliamentary approval in due course.

DEFENCE

RAF Logistics

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of Royal Air Force Logistics.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am today able to report, as the basis for formal consultation between the Department and the trade unions and other interested parties, the outcome of detailed studies into the structure and location of the RAF Logistics Command. A consultative document is being passed to the local and national trade unions concerned today.

The Government accepted last year the recommendations of the PROSPECT study into the future size and structure of the Ministry of Defence. Central to the study's recommendations was the principle that only a small core headquarters should be retained in London, with the remaining functions being redeployed. For the RAF, the report recommended that the staff of the Air Member for Supply and Organisation should move out of London, and together with associated elements of RAF Support Command, which would be abolished, form a Logistics Command the headquarters of which will be located at the current RAFSC headquarters at Brampton near Huntingdon. The purpose of the studies now completed has been to establish the best long-term locations for the remainder of the staffs affected. Apart from Brampton, these staff are predominantly in London, At Harrogate, RAF High Wycombe, RAF Stanbridge in Bedforshire, and RAF Swanton Morley in Norfolk. The Defence Codification Authority and air technical publications branches in Glasgow were not involved in these studies.

The Logistics Command will comprise three major functional groupings; the maintenance group, which is a defence support agency, and which was not considered in these studies; the group responsible for communications and information systems; and the support management group. The work of all these is underpinned by the technical and computing services provided at RAF Swanton Morley and RAF Stanbridge.

The studies have recommended that to the maximum extent possible the units carrying out these functions should be collocated in the Brampton area. This would make maximum use of the existing headquarters at Brampton, and of the nearby station at RAF Wyton which as a result of planned changes has significant potential for reuse. A crucial consideration was the cost of providing both office accommodation and married quarters for collocated staff. In particular, complete reprovision of the

poor quality buildings on the existing Harrogate site would be extremely expensive compared to the smaller degree of new construction and conversion which would be required at Wyton.

If the recommendations of these studies are confirmed following consultation, the initial moves would be of predominantlyy RAF staff from RAF High Wycombe. Subsequent moves out of Harrogate, London, and Swanton Morley would take place over the period 1994 to 1997. RAF Swanton Morley and the MOD site at Harrogate would be released for disposal. These recommendations have been arrived at only after the most exhaustive study of a wide range of options for the future Logistics Command, including nine sites in the north and East Anglian sites.

The Department is very conscious of the difficulties which surround such a large reorganisation. The Ministry of Defence is the largest Government employer in Harrogate, and one of the largest in North and West Yorkshire, and some compulsory redundancy cannot be excluded. Everything possible will be done to avoid or minimise redundancies at all the locations concerned. Staff will where appropriate be transferred at public expense. In addition there are some opportunities for employment in other Government Departments in the areas concerned, and the Ministry of Defence will co-ordinate closely with these Departments to maximise the opportunities. In addition, anyone made redundant will be compensated under the terms of the appropriate pension scheme. They will also be entitled to participate in the Department's counselling and outplacement service.

These recommendations are subject to the full consultative procedures agreed between the Department and the Trade Unions.

Atomic Weapons Establishment

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made towards contractor operation of the Atomic Weapons Establishment.

Mr. Aitken: An invitation to tender for the full contractor operation of AWE is being issued today to the four companies who have expressed an interest in carrying out the work. These are British Aerospace, GEC, Rolls-Royce and the Hunting-BRAE consortium.

Cash Limits

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he can announce any changes to the class I limits and running costs limit for 1992-1993.

Mr. Rifkind: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary summer supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:—

Class I cash limits

£,000s

Vote	*Current cash limit*	*Change*	*Revised cash limit*
1	10,576,703	+ 89,454	10,666,157
2	9,593,000	− 202,397	9,390,603
3	1,933,308	− 34,432	1,898,876
4	1,577,000	+ 151,873	1,728,873
5	559,789	− 4,784	555,005

These changes decrease the block defence cash limit slightly by £286,000 from £24,239,800,000 to £24,239,514,000. They reflect the finalisation of the internal costing process and the net effect of transfers between the Ministry of Defence and other Government Departments. As was explained in paragraph 7 of the "Introduction to the Class I Estimates" booklet—HC 237-I—presented on 10 March 1992, because of the major changes resulting from the implementation of the new management strategy, the original estimates could not be constructed in the normal way.

The running costs limit is unchanged.

Soviet Warheads

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial arrangements have been made about the package of assistance to the former Soviet Union for the dismantling and transportation of nuclear warheads.

Mr. Aitken: Further to my answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *428*, the package of assistance is being provided to the former Soviet Union as a gift. The 1992-93 costs, of which £10 million is being charged to the reserve, will be met from class I, vote 2, subhead H8, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary summer supplementary estimate.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Television Service

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has access to a live television feed of the Chamber of the House in his office; and what is his policy towards providing this facility in hon. Members' offices.

Mr. Newton: In my Whitehall office, I have access to a spur from the feed to the Prime Minister's office.

As regards the possibility of supplying the clean feed to Members' offices, the Select Committee on Broadcasting published a report on this subject at the end of the last Parliament (House of Commons Paper No. 323 of Session 1991-92). The Committee recommended

"that the clean feed should be made available for inclusion in the package of television services whose provision in Members' offices is currently under consideration by the other relevant domestic Committees".

As the Broadcasting Committee acknowledged, its proposal requires the approval of the House as a whole. I hope to be in a position to arrange the necessary debate in the not too distant future.

Office Cost Allowance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council on what date he received the report on the office cost allowance from the Top Salaries Review Body.

Mr. Newton: My predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor), received the report on 14 February.

As I have already stated, I hope to be able to inform the House soon about our plans for publication.

Members' Staff

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) how many hon. Members employ *(a)* none, *(b)* one, *(c)* two, *(d)* three, *(e)* four and *(f)* five or more employees from their office costs allowance;

(2) how many hon. Members have not yet given any of their staff a contract of employment; how many individual staff do not have contracts; what action he is taking to ensure contracts are provided; and how many hon. Members have been contacted in order to point out that contracts should be issued.

Mr. Newton: As many Members who were elected for the first time at the recent general election have not yet notified the Fees Office of appointments of staff, any details supplied at this time would not be representative. Fees Office staff, when seeing new Members, are stressing the need for staff to be given contracts of employment and job descriptions.

Procedure Committee

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the outstanding recommendations of the Procedure Committee which have yet to be put before the House and specify, in each case, if he intends to put them to the House for decision.

Mr. Newton: Full details of the work of the Procedure Committee during the last Parliament, including the extent to which its various reports and recommendations have been considered and implemented, are set out in the Fifth Report of the Committee for Session 1991-92, which was published on 20 May.

I have no immediate plans to put any specific reports before the House because the next consideration of procedure is likely to be a further debate on the Report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House, whose recommendations include a number of those made in earlier Procedure Committee reports.

Disabled Employees

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Lord President of the Council what percentage of the total work force in the Privy Council Office are registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within the Privy Council Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: There are no registered disabled among the 31 staff currently employed in the Privy Council Office. Direct recruitment is rarely undertaken, but application forms and selection procedures conform with the relevant equal opportunities code of practice.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Holdings

16. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the total number of agricultural holdings in Britain (i) in 1979 and (ii) in 1992; and if he will give the Government's estimate of the number of agricultural holdings in the year 2000.

Mr. Curry: In 1979 the total was 295,000 and in 1991, the latest for which figures are available, there were 274,000. No forecast is available for the year 2000.

Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning)

17. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions have taken place regarding the implementation of a de-commissioning scheme for certain United Kingdom registered fishing vessels.

Mr. Curry: The Government's proposals for effort control and decommissioning were set out in the recent consultation document.

Common Agricultural Policy

18. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress towards reform of the common agricultural policy.

20. **Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest position concerning common agricultural policy reform; and if he will make a statement.

29. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement about progress on reform of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Gentleman to the statement that I made to the House on 22 May.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the amount of the British contribution to the common agricultural policy for 1991; and what percentage this contribution makes of the whole common agricultural policy funding.

Mr. Curry: It is not possible to give a figure. The United Kingdom contributes to the EC budget as a whole, not to individual parts of the budget such as the common agricultural policy. Moreover, the United Kingdom's contribution to the budget is reduced by the abatement —£2,366 million in 1991-92—to reduce our overall share and this cannot realistically be allocated to the different parts of the budget.

Hedgerows

19. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to preserve hedgerows and encourage planting of new ones.

Mr. Curry: This Department encourages farmers to preserve and maintain our hedgerow stock through the farm and conservation grant and environmentally sensitive area schemes, and through the advice given by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service.

EC Beef Regime

21. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the extent of fraudulent trading within the common agricultural policy beef regime; and what has been the estimated cost to public funds.

Mr. Curry: It is not possible to estimate the extent of fraud in the common agricultural policy, since, by

definition, undetected fraud cannot be measured. No separate figures are available for fraud within the beef regime; however, overall in 1990, 819 cases of irregularity (the definition of which goes wider than fraud) in EAGGF guarantee expenditure were reported by member states with a value of 138 mecu (£98 million). These cases represent about 0·5 per cent. of EAGGF guarantee expenditure in that year. However, fraud is clearly a serious problem and must be tackled vigorously.

Farming Regulations

22. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to reduce the burden of regulations on the farming community.

Mr. Curry: This Department participates fully in the Government's deregulation initiative. I am determined to keep the burden of regulation EEC and national as light as possible.

Recreational Events

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with land owners and the Forestry Commission in respect of its property in England about charging for access for recreational events.

Mr. Curry: I have had no such discussions but the Forestry Commission negotiates with the interests concerned when reviewing its charges for specialist recreational activities, such as orienteering and motor rallying.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Burns: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve animal welfare within the European Economic Community.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he is making in discussions with European Community counterparts about animal welfare.

Mr. Soames: The Government will continue to press for the high standards of animal welfare which apply in this country to be adopted throughout the European Community. We will give a high priority to animal welfare during the United Kingdom Presidency of the Community, and will seek to ensure that the Community acts on the principles of the declaration on protection of animals which was agreed at Maastricht following a United Kingdom initiative.

Seismic Surveys

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he is making with his investigations into the effect of seismic surveys on fishing stocks in the Solent and surrounding waters.

Mr. Curry: No work has yet been carried out in the United Kingdom on the effects of seismic surveys on fish stocks, but ELF Enterprise Caledonia which is undertaking the seismic survey west of the Isle of Wight, has agreed to fund research which will examine its effect on bass.

Fallen Stock

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he proposes to take to assist farmers to deal with fallen stock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Government are taking a number of measures to help alleviate the problems of disposal of fallen stock. They include:

provision of free advice and literature on the various methods of disposing of fallen animals, including safe burial;

the exemption of animal carcase incineration under 50kg per hour from regulations under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which makes the purchasing of small scale incinerators a more attractive investment;

issuing shortly for public consultation a planning policy guidance note on pollution and waste management including incineration;

funding research and development in the field of animal waste disposal, including a £0·5 million programme to determine which rendering processes destroy certain pathogens;

helping the rendering industry to examine alternatives to landfilling meat and bonemeal derived from specified bovine offal; and

identifying investment in the animal by-products sector as a priority area for EC grant aid.

The Department also intends to press the Community to move forward as rapidly as possible under the provisions of the EC Animal Waste Directive, to adopt animal health rules for knackers yards so as to ensure that they can continue their key role after 1995.

Poultry

28. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the latest position on relaxing the regulations of the Zoonoses Order concerning poultry.

Mr. Soames: I have already introduced a number of changes to the salmonella control measures in the light of developing circumstances and scientific knowledge. I will continue to keep the measures under close review.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number and percentage of *(a)* broilers and *(b)* laying hens in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which had (i) signs of bone defects or were (ii) seriously lame on reaching the slaughterhouse, in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Soames: These figures are not collected centrally. However, in 1989 a survey commissioned by the Department indicated that 29 per cent. of hens from battery cages had damaged bones by the time they reached the stunner. Handling techniques were addressed in the light of these results and we plan to commission a further survey so see what changes have resulted. We also have a continuing programme of research into leg problems in broilers.

Whaling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy during the United Kingdom presidency of the Council of Ministers to seek a ban on whaling within EC waters and by EC nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Whaling, in any form, is already banned within United Kingdom fishery limits. No whaling for commercial or scientific purposes is believed to take place within other member states' fishery limits. The United Kingdom, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain, as members of the International Whaling Commission, are bound by the IWC's moratorium. The Community prohibits trade in whale products through its implementation of the convention on trade in endangered species.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to support the French Government proposal for an Antarctic whale sanctuary; if he will encourage other International Whaling Commission member states to support the proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The proposal by the Government of France for a sanctuary in the southern hemisphere is due to be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Glasgow at the end of June. Details of the French proposals have only just been received and will receive careful study. The proposals address a number of questions to the commission's scientific committee, whose advice we shall also need to evaluate.

Sandeels

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received for the creation of exclusion prohibition areas against a directed sandeel fishery on *(a)* Dogger Bank, *(b)* off Shetland and *(c)* in the south-west mackerel box; and what proposals he has for introducing this.

Mr. Curry: I am considering representations from the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations. Sandeel fishing is not permitted at present off Shetland. Small mesh fishing in the south west mackerel box is for species such as horse mackerel for human consumption as well as possible industrial end uses. The EC Commission has undertaken to present a report on industrial fishing before 1 September 1992. We will seek to progress any action on this report during our Presidency of the Commu[illegible].

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received for the establishment of a total allowable catch for sandeels; and what proposals he has to introduce this.

Mr. Curry: The most recent representation is from the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations. Sandeels are naturally a very short-lived species and it is not possible to set realistic total allowable catches by the usual procedures. Currently limits are set by licence for the west coast of Scotland or a quota arrangement between the EC and Norway.

Industrial Fishing

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he intends making to advance restrictions on industrial fishing while holding the EC presidency.

Mr. Curry: The EC Commission has undertaken to present a report on industrial fishing before 1 September 1992. We will seek to make progress on this issue during our Presidency.

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations have been made to him in respect of industrial fishing in the south-west mackerel box.

Mr. Curry: This year I have received six letters.

Pollution Control

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will increase the level of grant aid to farmers for installing pollution control measures.

Mr. Curry: Our 50 per cent. grant rate is already exceptionally high. The normal maximum rate which member states can pay for this type of grant under EC regulations is 35 per cent. and our higher rate was only agreed by the Commission because the grant was carefully targeted on specific types of investment.

GATT

Mr. Godsiff: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the discussions he has had with EC Agriculture Ministers concerning the Uruguay round of GATT talks and the levels of reduction in agricultural subsidies in the EC.

Mr. Curry: The GATT round negotiations are regularly discussed by the Agriculture Council. We have strongly supported the Commission in its attempts to find the basis for an early and balanced agreement which would meet the objectives of the round as regards reductions in agricultural support world wide. The recent agreement on CAP reform will strengthen the Commission's position in these exchanges.

Common Fisheries Policy

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representation he has received regarding the reform of the common fisheries policy to provide for a package of social measures to assist individuals and communities affected by a contraction of the fleet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Curry: Our officials have received representations from the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations about social measures.

Officials have also participated in discussions held by the European Commission, within the framework of the mid-term review of the CFP and the reform of the structural funds, about possible socio-economic proposals. The Commission's ideas are at a very formative stage and it is too early to say what they will formally propose or to what areas the proposals may apply. The Government will ensure that the needs of United Kingdom fishermen are taken properly into account as discussions continue.

Brown Hare Syndrome

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many hares in Britain were found to be suffering from European brown hare syndrome in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Curry: Although the Department is aware of an apparent decrease in the incidence of European brown hare syndrome in Great Britain, the disease is not notifiable and so comprehensive data are not maintained.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 5 June 1992

HOME DEPARTMENT

Remand Prisoners (Plymouth)

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends taking following the escape of six remand prisoners from the remand centre at Crownhill police station, Plymouth, on 29 May.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Responsibility for the security of police facilities used to hold remand prisoners lies with the chief officer of police concerned. I understand that the Devon and Cornwall constabulary is enquiring into the circumstances of the escape and reviewing the relevant security arrangements.

Crime, North Yorkshire

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe what action he proposes to take to combat crime in north Yorkshire.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[pursuant to his reply, 14 May 1992 c. 730]:* In answering the hon. Member's supplementary question to the above question, I passed on information which I now know to have been inaccurate. The average annual rate of increase in recorded crime in the North Yorkshire police area between 1974 and 1979 was 1·5 per cent. and between 1979 and 1991 7·8 per cent. I apologise to the hon. Member for any inconvenience caused by the earlier inaccurate information.

EMPLOYMENT

Benefit Disqualifications

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many unemployed people were disqualified for unemployment benefit and for what periods, under each paragraph of section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975, in the area covered by the Newport, Gwent unemployment benefit office in the week commencing 8 June; and if she will place this information in the Library;

(2) what information is available to her, and from what sources, as to the lengths of periods of disqualification for unemployment benefit imposed under section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975.

Mr. McLoughlin: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service Executive Agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Health and Safety at Work

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans her Department has to submit films on *(a)* well-being at work, *(b)* safety at work, *(c)* control of air pollution at work or *(d)* the control of noise and vibrations at work, for the European video film festival on safety, hygiene and health protection at work sponsored by the European Commission, to be held in Thessaloniki in October.

Mr. McLoughlin: We expect that the United Kingdom film and video industry will be well represented at the European video film festival.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has written to more than 250 film and video producers in the United Kingdom who are known to have made health and safety videos which may be eligible for entry to the film festival.

HSE will also select suitable videos made by its own film unit and videos commissioned from outside producers for submission to the European Commission by the 19 June deadline.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish a table setting out the budget allocations to each TEC for each block of their expenditure for 1992-93.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on 19 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *134*.

EC Ministers

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what engagements she is planning to have with her European counterparts in the next three weeks.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment will be meeting European Community employment ministers at the Social Affairs Council on 24 June. Before the Council, she plans to met a number of her counterparts.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Works of Art (Exports)

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what decisions he has made on the recommendations of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art in its recent report; and if he will make a statement on the proposal for the introduction of a very restricted list of heritage objects which could be prohibited from export.

Mr. Mellor: I share the view, expressed by almost all who made representations on the report, that the disadvantages of listing far outweigh the advantages. Listing would represent a diminution in the rights of owners to dispose of their property as they saw fit. And prohibition upon the export of outstanding heritage items would distort the market value, both for outstanding items and others. Therefore, I have firmly decided against the committee's recommendation, made most reluctantly, to list works of art.

The protection of the heritage is one of my prime concerns. There are, however, ways of achieving that aim other than listing, such as the scheme for acceptances in lieu of tax. The recent acquisitions of the paintings

"Portrait of a lady with a squirrel and a starling" by Holbein and "The Old Horse Guards, London from St. James's Park" by Canaletto demonstrate the role that both the private and public sectors can play. I have assumed responsibility for the controls on licensing the export of works of art, formerly undertaken by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, with effect from 1 June 1992. I am considering the committee's other largely procedural recommendations.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will give an estimate for the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1992-93.

Mr. Mellor: Estimated expenditure by the Department of National Heritage on press and public relations for 1992-93 is likely to be in the region of £250,000 for running costs, and £500,000 on staffing costs.

Buildings at Risk Trust

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if the Buildings at Risk Trust has, directly or indirectly, received public funds from his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The Buildings at Risk Trust has been offered a grant of £12,975 for 1992-93 towards the costs of running its Buildings at Risk Advisory Service. This grant was offered under the Department of the Environment's special grants programme, the heritage element of which is now the responsibility of my Department. No grant has yet been claimed.

EDUCATION

School Sports Grounds

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will estimate the number of schools sports grounds that have been sold by local education authorities each year since 1979.

Mr. Forth: The information which the hon. Member requests is unavailable, since local education authorities are not required to inform the Department of disposals of surplus land and buildings. However, the DES included a specific sum of £0·5 million in the Sports Council's grant-in-aid for 1991-92 for the preparation of a register of recreational land to monitor gains and losses in playing fields. The register is due for completion by June 1993.

School Closures

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what process of appeal there is against the Minister's decision to close a school, when new or corrected information becomes available.

Mr. Forth: There is no statutory process of appeal. It is open to a party with an interest in the matter to challenge a decision in the courts.

Physical Education

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the average number of hours per week devoted to physical education in secondary schools for each year since 1981.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Grant-maintained Status

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what educational criteria he is using to determine applications from schools for grant-maintained status;

(2) what financial criteria he is using to determine applications for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend determines each application for grant-maintained status on its merits, taking account of individual schools' circumstances. His main concern is that all grant maintained schools should be viable in both educational and financial terms.

Religious Schools

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many applications from religious schools for voluntary-aided status over the last three years have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused; and if he will list the religious denomination of each such application, and of each application which is currently being considered.

Mr. Forth: The following table gives the information requested. (This excludes schools formed by the amalgamation of existing voluntary schools but includes applications for new voluntary aided schools where no independent school already existed.) There are no applications made within the last three years that are currently under consideration but following a judicial review my right hon. Friend is currently reconsidering an application made prior to June 1989 for the establishment of a Muslim voluntary-aided school.

	Number of applications since June 1989	*Number granted*	*Number refused*
Church of England	3	0	3
Church of England/ Methodist	2	1	1
Roman Catholic	4	1	3
Jewish	4	2	2
Total	13	4	9

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the criteria he applies when considering applications from religious schools for voluntary-aided status; and what changes or modifications have been made in those criteria over the past three years.

Mr. Forth: In reaching a decision, my right hon. Friend takes account of a number of factors, including:

(i) the need for additional places within the maintained sector;
(ii) denominational need for a particular type of education;
(iii) whether the LEA supports the proposals;
(iv) suitability of premises;

(v) the school's ability to deliver the National Curriculum.

No changes or modifications have been made to these criteria in the past three years.

School Governors

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will take steps to quantify the increase of time devoted by voluntary governors of primary and secondary schools respectively consequent on *(a)* increased responsibilities arising from local management of schools and *(b)* further requirements of time on governors of grant maintained secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: A survey carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research in 1990 found that the average amount of time spent by governors on their duties was 10 hours a term rising to 20 hours for heads and 30 for chairmen. There was no substantial difference between primary and secondary school governors, and it is not evident that more governor time is necessarily needed in a grant-maintained school.

I pay tribute to the many parents, teachers, and others who voluntarily give of their time to run their local schools.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps are being taken by his Department to tackle the imbalance between women and men in promotional posts and at levels of senior management in both the teaching and lecturing professions.

Mr. Forth: Employers should be fully aware of the existing statutory requirements governing gender issues in employment. It is not for the Department to seek to influence the choices they may make in appointments to senior management posts.

TRANSPORT

Speed Control

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in developing measures to control vehicle speeds through villages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Since the announcement last July that the Department was to take action jointly with the County Surveyors' Society, a working group has been established on which the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office are also represented. The group has met several times, and has produced an interim report. A number of schemes have been identified in villages on trunk and county roads across England, Wales, and Scotland on which a variety of traffic calming and related measures are to be introduced to constrain vehicle speeds. These schemes will be monitored through the summer and autumn. The results will be evaluated, and will feed into a final report from the working group which I am expecting early next year. This work will provide the basis for detailed guidance to highway authorities on the measures which prove most effective.

A leaflet has been produced describing the main features of the working group's deliberations and its interim report. This has been deposited in the Library, and copies are available on request from the Department's traffic policy division.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the research undertaken into the risk of fire in the channel tunnel will be placed before the House.

Mr. Freeman: Many of the tests and studies relating to the risk of fire in the tunnel shuttle trains are being undertaken by Eurotunnel; publication of the results of any of that work is a matter for the company but the safety authority proposes to publish a general commentary on the work. It will not be possible to publish the commentary until the tests and studies have been completed; this will occur next year at a later stage of commissioning.

In addition, Eurotunnel has commissioned a study of the overall safety of the tunnel system. The safety authority has employed consultants to review Eurotunnel's work and proposes, next year, to issue a report on the outcome.

Ports and Airports

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out his proposals for the privatisation of the principal trust ports and municipal airports in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: Under the Ports Act 1991 four trust ports, Clyde, Forth, Medway and Tees and Hartlepool, have already successfully sought privatisation and a fifth, the Port of London Authority, has sold its commercial docks at Tilbury into the private sector. My right hon. Friend believes that the proper place for the major trust ports is in the private sector and he hopes that more of them will bring themselves forward for privatisation. He recognises however that the circumstances of the individual trust ports vary greatly. Before compelling a port to privatise itself under the powers in the Ports Act which will become available to him in July of next year he will consider its circumstances very carefully.

As regards municipal airports I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) on 18 May 1992, *Official Report, 31.*

Seismic Surveys

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what studies he has undertaken of the safety issues raised by the towed sonar/seismic survey being undertaken off the Needles in view of the congestion in these waters at this time of year from yachts and pleasure craft;

(2) if he will undertake a special survey into the safety aspects of the towed seismic survey being undertaken off the Needles in respect of the congestion of these waters at the present time of year.

Mr. Norris: Ships engaged in seismic surveys are required to show the signals prescribed in the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea which indicate they are restricted in their ability to manoeuvre. Special surveys are undertaken if a need is clearly identified, but no approach has been made in respect of seismic surveys off the Needles.

NAVTEX

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the progress being made by the French authorities for the broadcast of NAVTEX information in English.

Mr. Norris: The international language for NAVTEX broadcasts is English. I understand that the French authorities have recently begun to issue NAVTEX broadcasts from Brest in English, but warnings broadcast by the French elsewhere in the English channel are not available through NAVTEX. However, the Hydrographic Office monitor these French broadcasts and arrange for them to be re-issued in English by NAVTEX where appropriate.

Cash Limits

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a breakdown of his Department's expenditure by the smallest geographic unit possible.

Mr. Norris: The latest estimates of general Government expenditure on transport by territory and region are given in appendix E of "Public Expenditure Analyses to 1994-95: Statistical Supplement to the Autumn Statement", Cm. 1920.

NATIONAL FINANCE

BCCI

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many payments have been made by the Deposit Protection Board to depositors of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International in terms of *(a)* numbers and *(b)* value.

Mr. Nelson: I understand that up to close of business on 28 May 1992 payments have been made by the Deposit Protection Board to some 450 depositors of BCCI, involving total protection payments of some £1·6 million.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on the Deposit Protection Board and payments to former depositors of BCCI.

Mr. Nelson: The amount which the Deposit Protection Scheme will pay out to former depositors of BCCI will depend on how many depositors make valid claims under the scheme. The Deposit Protection Board is anxious to make payments as soon as practicable, in line with its statutory duty.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what date the first payment was made under the Deposit Protection Board to former depositors of BCCI.

Mr. Nelson: I understand that the Deposit Protection Board made the first payments to former depositors of BCCI on 16 April 1992.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many applications have been made to the Deposit Protection Board for compensation by former depositors of BCCI.

Mr. Nelson: I understand that, as at close of business on 28 May 1992, some 15,000 applications for compensation have been made to the Deposit Protection Board by former depositors of BCCI.

Customs Aircraft

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evaluation Her Majesty's customs and waterguard service has made of the use of airborne radar surveillance to counter drug smuggling and illegal immigration; and if he will list the aircraft available to Her Majesty's customs for these duties.

Sir John Cope: Her Majesty's Customs in association with other Government Departments carry out target-based and routine aerial surveillance over land, territorial and international waters. A procurement exercise is being evaluated to establish a managed aerial surveillance service uniquely for the Department using the best of modern technology including radar.

For security reasons, it is not the practice to identify specific aircraft used.

Shareholdings

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list his quoted shareholdings together with their value and the percentage of the issued share capital owned by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Nelson: The table shows the ordinary shares held by the Government, their market valuation and the percentage of the issued share capital that they represent.

Government ordinary shareholdings in private sector companies

Company	*Number of shares (millions)*	*Market valuation[1] (£ million)*	*Proportion of issued capital (percent)*
BAA	14·8	95·0	3·0
British Airways	3·2	9·6	0·4
British Gas	0·1	0·2	[2]—
British Petroleum	101·2	277·3	1·9
British Steel	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—
BT	1,352·7	4,856·4	22·0
Mersey Docks and Harbour Company	12·4	29·9	20·7
Anglian Water	4·8	20·9	1·6
Northumbrian Water	0·7	3·0	1·0
North West Water	5·3	23·2	1·5
Severn Trent	6·7	26·7	1·9
Southern Water	2·7	11·1	1·6
South West Water	0·7	3·1	0·6
Thames Water	7·7	33·8	2·0
Welsh Water	2·1	10·1	1·5
Wessex Water	1·5	7·5	1·5
Yorkshire Water	3·1	14·1	1·6
Eastern Electricity	4·3	14·9	1·6
East Midlands Electricity	2·3	8·7	1·1
London Electricity	2·3	9·1	1·1
Manweb	1·9	8·0	1·6
Midlands Electricity	2·9	10·5	1·4
Northern Electric	1·9	7·4	1·5
Norweb	2·6	10·6	1·5
Seeboard	2·4	9·3	1·9
Southern Electric	3·2	12·0	1·2
South Wales Electricity	1·1	4·6	1·1
South Western Electricity	2·3	8·7	1·9
Yorkshire Electricity	2·5	11·0	1·2
National Power	500·6	1,156·5	39·3
PowerGen	317·9	759·9	40·7
Scottish Hydro-Electric	13·3	34·8	3·5
Scottish Power	29·4	74·5	3·6

[1] Close, May 27
[2] Negligible

Public Borrowing

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contingency plans he has made to deposit funds in Europe if public borrowing exceeds the limit set by the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Nelson: There is no need for such contingency plans. The Maastricht treaty does not set a limit on public borrowing. A member state would have to be judged to be running an "excessive" budget deficit for sanctions to be imposed, and such sanctions will not apply until stage 3 of economic and monetary union, and then only as a last resort. Although the United Kingdom has no obligation to move to stage 3, the Government's policies are designed to avoid running deficits that might be judged excessive.

CIS (Debts)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy towards the proposal advanced in April by the treasurer of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, that the United Kingdom write-off debts inherited by countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States from the former Soviet Union in exchange for the provision to the United Kingdom of recoverable nuclear materials.

Mr. Nelson: The safety of nuclear materials in the republics of the former Soviet Union is a key concern, as is the whole process of economic adjustment in those republics, including the servicing of debts. The United Kingdom is working closely with other Governments and international institutions on these issues. Linking the two issues, which raise widely differing concerns, would not be helpful.

Value Added Tax

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice he has received from the European Commission about the levying of value added tax on food, electricity and children's clothing; what proposals the Commission has made concerning the jurisdiction of the European Court in this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: None. All the United Kingdom's current zero rates are guaranteed by the Sixth VAT Directive which can be amended only by unanimous agreement of all member states.

EC Budget

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated *(a)* contribution to the European Community by the United Kingdom and *(b)* receipts from the European Community to the United Kingdom in each of the five last years for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 21 May 1992]:* Information concerning United Kingdom contributions to and receipts from the Community Budget for the years 1987-91 is set out in the following table. The figure for receipts covers public sector receipts only: the Commission does not provide member states with details of payments made directly to the private sector.

£ million

Year	*Gross contribution after abatement*	*Public sector receipts*
1987	4,049	2,328
1988	3,544	2,182
1989	4,431	2,116
1990	4,658	2,183
1991	3,309	2,765

Hunterprint

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what printing contracts the company Hunterprint had or has outstanding with HMSO; and if he will give the dates and details of the nature and subject matter of the printed material for each contract.

Mr. Nelson: The hon. Gentleman's question falls within the scope of the policy announced in Cm 1263: arrangements have therefore been made for the Controller and Chief Executive of HMSO to respond direct. Copies of the letter will be placed in the House Library and with the Public Information Office.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Vietnam

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make further funds available towards the costs of non-governmental organisation projects in Vietnam.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In May 1990, we committed £1 million to help finance non-government organisations' development projects in the two provinces to which the majority of the boat people return. This money has now been fully allocated to 18 projects which are having a positive local impact. I have now decided to commit a further £1 million towards the cost of further NGO projects in areas to which the majority of migrants will be returning. This new tranche will be focused on job creation projects and projects which have a direct effect on the economic well-being of the communities. This £1 million will be additional to expenditure in Vietnam under the joint funding scheme.

UNCED

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what commitments to increase overseas development aid will be made by the United Kingdom to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government are willing to provide new and additional resources to the replenishment of the global environment facility, if other donors also do so. The GEF will help finance actions by developing countries, related particularly to climate change and biodiversity, which have benefits globally but which would not be justified in terms of their national benefits alone.

Special Programme for Africa

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help he proposes to give to the second phase of the special programme for Africa which was set up by the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) on 13 May at column. *141.*

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister if he has any plans to further consider awarding compensation to veterans of British nuclear tests and, or their families; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government will consider sympathetically a claim for compensation on behalf of any ex-service man who can be shown to have suffered ill health from exposure to ionising radiation as a result of duties in connection with the nuclear test programme. An expert study conducted in 1988 by the National Radiological Protection Board conceded that the overall incidence of death and malignant disease among British nuclear test veterans has been no worse than for people who were not involved in the tests. A further report from the NRPB on more recent data on mortality and cancer evidence is expected later this year.

Libya

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister when he received the proposals from the United Nations for a meeting between representatives of the United Kingdom and Libyan Governments to discuss security issues relating to the supply of arms to the Provisional IRA; what will be the areas of discussion at the meeting on 9 June; and if he will explain the manner in which these arrangements were made public.

The Prime Minister: The United Nations Secretary-General told us on 14 May that the Libyan Foreign Minister had written to him offering to meet our long-standing request for information on Libya's connections with the Provisional IRA. We have agreed to a meeting under UN auspices in Geneva on 9 June at which this information can be handed over. There will be no discussion at the meeting. In response to press inquiries, the Secretary-General's spokesman in New York confirmed on 1 June that this meeting would take place.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister if he will take steps to ensure that the outcome of meetings of the Council of Ministers of the European Communities held between 13 March and 6 May are reported in the usual way, in cases where such action has not yet been taken.

The Prime Minister: I have asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to write to the hon. Member and to place a copy of his letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Lockerbie Bombing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what communications Her Majesty's Government have received from the Government of Libya relating to two persons allegedly connected with the Lockerbie bombing of Pan Am 103.

The Prime Minister: We have had various approaches from Libyans and intermediaries over the Lockerbie bombing. None of these amounts to Libyan compliance with UN Security Council resolutions 731 and 748.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to establish a sustainable development commission in the United Kingdom in conjunction with the United Nations.

The Prime Minister: I have no such plans.

President Bush

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister when he next expects to meet President Bush; and what matters he proposes to discuss.

The Prime Minister: I shall meet President Bush at Camp David this weekend. I expect to discuss a wide range of subjects with him.

Earth Summit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals on transfers of military spending to environmental investment will be put forward by the United Kingdom at the United Nations conference on environment and development.

The Prime Minister: There are no plans to put forward any such proposal.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what attempts have been made to minimise the use of official cars by the United Kingdom delegation to the United Nations conference on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro this month.

The Prime Minister: We have made it a priority to limit the use of official cars at the Earth summit in Rio.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out details of the critical representations made to Her Majesty's Government since 31 May on the United Kingdom's policies and proposals for the United Nations conference on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro; and what response he has made to the respective criticisms.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) on 2 June 1992 at column *392.*

SOCIAL SECURITY

Spending Power

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures similar to those in his Department's tax/benefit model table, including the

various component figures, showing net weekly spending power for a married couple with one child aged 16 years where *(a)* both parents are unemployed and the child is at school, *(b)* one parent takes up employment in May 1992 for four hours a day, five days a week at rates of pay of (i) £2 per hour, (ii) £2·50 per hour and (iii) £3 per hour, and the child is at school and *(c)* the parent remains in employment as at *(b)* but the child leaves school and is unable to gain a youth training place, after family credit entitlement of 26 weeks has elapsed.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the tables. All assumptions used are as those in the published tax/benefit model tables. Each family is assumed to live in council property appropriate to its size and to pay estimated average rent and community charge.

It should be noted that the results in the tables cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large. The tables use illustrative rents and do not, therefore, reflect the full range of housing costs which people may face.

Earnings and Benefits—Family head in full-time work as at April 1992

Tax threshold = £99·32 *Basic tax rate = 25 per cent.*

(a) Total net income on income support = £141·01

Net income after rent and community charge on income support = £102·51

		Gross earnings	Tax	National insurance contribution	Take home pay	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Community charge	Community charge benefit	Total net income	Net income after rent and community charge
Married couple with 1 child aged 16													
(b)	(i)	40·00	0·00	0·00	40·00	62·45	9·65	27·96	27·54	10·54	8·33	147·97	109·47
	(ii)	50·00	0·00	0·00	50·00	62·45	9·65	27·96	21·04	10·54	6·83	149·97	111·47
	(iii)	60·00	0·00	1·62	58·38	62·45	9·65	27·96	15·59	10·54	5·58	151·65	113·15
Married couple aged 25 or over													
(c)	(i)	40·00	0·00	0·00	40·00	0·00	0·00	27·96	27·96	10·54	8·43	76·39	37·89
	(ii)	50·00	0·00	0·00	50·00	0·00	0·00	27·96	27·96	10·54	8·43	86·39	47·89
	(iii)	60·00	0·00	1·62	58·38	0·00	0·00	27·96	27·96	10·54	8·43	94·77	56·27

Note: The gross earnings at (b) and (c) are equivalent to the hourly rates given in the Question.

Benefit Claims

Ms. Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest annual figures for the London borough of Lambeth for the number of claims for *(a)* housing benefit, *(b)* income support and *(c)* family credit; and what those figures were one year ago and two years ago.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support and family credit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available, and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Young People (Benefits)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will reassess the benefit needs of persons aged 16 and 17 years living with parents on benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Those 16 and 17-year-olds living with parents on benefit, and not in full-time education, employment or training, may in certain circumstances be eligible for income support under the severe hardship provision. When assessing any claim so made, full account is taken of parents' circumstances.

Water Rates

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in England and Wales are paying their water rates via deduction from social security.

Mr. Burt: At the end of February 1992 there were 116,890 income support recipients with deductions for water charges. This figure is based on statistics collected by the Benefits Agency's management information system at the end of February 1992. The figure is provisional and may be subject to amendment.

Mortgage Debt

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken in the past 12 months to find out to what extent income support claimants were in arrears with their mortgage payments, and what information has become available to his Department, centrally or locally, as a result.

Mr. Burt: All income support claimants with mortgages have been sent a form, which they were required to have completed and returned by their lenders, giving information about their mortgage account. If the account is in arrears, the total arrears and details of payments made in the last three months are entered on the form. The completed forms are kept with the claimant's case papers for use in calculating and paying the mortgage interest element of income support. The information on the forms is not collated centrally or locally.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of income support claimants in the South Gwent and Islwyn district with mortgage liabilities were in arrears with their mortgage payments, in total and by ranges of amounts of arrears and numbers of monthly instalments unpaid, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Taxation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people face a marginal tax/benefit withdrawal rate of 70 per cent. or more; and how many of them are in receipt of family credit.

Mr. Burt: In 1992-93, it is projected that 490,000 heads of benefit units receiving income-related benefits, where at least one partner works 16 hours a week or more, face marginal deduction rates of 70 per cent. or over. It is estimated that 375,000 of them would receive family credit.

Projections are based on three years pooled family expenditure survey data uprated to 1992-93 prices, taxes and benefit levels. They do not take into account disability working allowance, or transitional protection associated with the change in the family credit/income support hours rule.

Cash Limits

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether there has been any change in the cash limited expenditure of his Department for 1992-93.

Mr. Scott: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIV vote 3 (housing benefit administration and community charge benefit administration, payments into the social fund in respect of discretionary expenditure and other grants) will be increased by £13,981,000 from £351,991,000 to £365,972,000. This revision takes account of an increase in the grant-in-aid to the Independent Living Fund (£13,981,000) to enable it to continue to help severely disabled persons to live independently. The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

WALES

Queensferry Roundabout

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will erect warning signs near Queensferry roundabout warning lorry drivers of the low railway bridge at Shotton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a county road matter and one for Clwyd county council to consider as the local highway authority.

Industrial Output

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of overall industrial output in Wales is accounted for by the defence industry.

Mr. David Hunt: The information required is not available centrally.

Teachers

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female primary and secondary school teachers; and how many (i) male and (ii) female headteachers there are in each sector in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is contained in the publication entitled "Statistics of Education in Wales: Schools—No. 5 1991", section 5, tables 5.06–5.08, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure that all lists of candidates for public appointments in Wales contain equal numbers of men and women.

Mr. David Hunt: All public appointments are made on the basis of aptitude and merit. In addition to those overriding criteria, other factors are taken into account.

I have agreed an action plan designed to increase the proportion of public appointments held by women. As part of this, officials are required to include at least two women in the shortlist of candidates.

Managers

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of managers in Wales; and how many of them are women.

Mr. David Hunt: It is estimated from the 1991 labour force survey that there were 162,000 managers and administrators in Wales; of these 43,000 were women.

Bilingual Health Promotion Material

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the provision of bilingual health promotion material by his Department to district health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Most of the health promotion materials used in Wales are produced by the Health Promotion Authority for Wales. Wherever possible, the authority published this material in Welsh or bilingual form.

When the Department arranges the publication of its own posters it always ensures that they are either in bilingual format or are available in English and Welsh.

This Department does distribute English-only posters which are produced by the Department of Health. We are currently examining means by which these can be translated, printed and made available in the Welsh language.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women amongst the ranks of (i) senior lecturers and (ii) professors in further and higher education in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information about the number of full-time staff in higher education, voluntary colleges and in higher and further education institutions maintained by local education authorities in 1990-91 is given in the following table together with information for the University of Wales which has been shown separately. Lecturers are categorised differently in the two groups, all categories of teaching staff are thus shown in the table.

Lecturers

a. Voluntary colleges, and higher and further education institutions maintained by local education authorities (as at 31 March 1990)

	Males	Females
Principals	40	3
Vice-principals	38	5
Heads of Department	184	23
Reader	3	—
Principal lecturers	242	16
Senior lecturers	1,044	228
Lecturer grade	1,560	945
Total	3,111	1,220

Source: Database of Teacher Records (DFE).

b. University of Wales[1] (as at 31 December 1990)

	Males	Females
Professors	270	4
Readers/senior lecturers	539	23
Lecturers	1,297	331
Others[2]	182	118
Total	2,288	476

[1]Staff totals includes staff whose salary is not wholly financed by the university.

[2]Includes certain clinical academic staff and research and analogous staff whose starting salary is below that of lecturer grades.

Source: University Statistical Record.

Pupil Statistics

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the total numbers of *(a)* male and *(b)* female pupils studying (i) computer science, (ii) physics, (iii) maths, (iv) biology, (v) music and (vi) drama up to (1) GCSE level or (2) A-Level in Wales in the last year for which figures are available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the number of pupils studying particular subjects is available from the 1989 secondary school staffing survey and is shown in the following table.

Information for males and females separately is not available.

Number of pupils studying subjects to GCSE and A-level in Wales 1989[1]

	GCSE	A-level
Computer studies	16,100	1,700
Physics	24,800	5,400
Maths	70,400	11,100
Biology	33,600	8,000
Music	5,900	1,200
Drama	3,800	500

[1] *Source:* Secondary school staffing survey 1989. All data rounded to the nearest 100.

Official Visits

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish, for each day between 16 March and 9 April, all the official visits he undertook, indicating for each day the places he visited, the times he visited, the mode of transport he used and the total cost of all these visits.

Mr. David Hunt: During the recent general election campaign, the three Welsh Office Ministers retained all of their Welsh Office responsibilities. In a political capacity, I visited every constituency in Wales between 19 March and 9 April 1992. I also undertook three official engagements, listed in the table, travelling by car at no expense to the Welsh Office.

OFFICIAL ENGAGEMENTS

Wednesday 25 March, 11.00 am to 12.00 noon
Official opening of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Unit, Glangwili Hospital; and visit to Cam Cyntaf sheltered employment unit, Cillefwr Industrial Estate, Carmarthen.

Friday 3 April, 10.40 am to 11.15 am
Official opening of new pilot line, Pilkington Micronics, Deeside.

Tuesday 7 April, 11.00 am to 12.00 noon
Official opening of Paediatric Unit, University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff.

County Council Elections

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether it is his intention that the county council elections, due to be held in Wales in 1993, shall proceed as planned.

Mr. David Hunt: I have been approached by both local authority associations in Wales to consider the cancellation of the county council elections due in 1993. No decision on this has yet been taken.

ENVIRONMENT

Dog Whelks

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the findings of the Marine Conservation Society's survey of the dog whelk population.

Mr. Maclean: This survey is funded by the Department of the Environment and four annual reports have been received to date. The latest indicates that the effects of tributyl tin are still widespread around the United Kingdom coast, but suggests that there are indications that some populations are beginning to recover.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his findings on the connection between tributyl tin and the decline of the dog whelk.

Mr. Maclean: Government-funded research on the effects of TBT on dog whelks has been carried out by the Plymouth marine laboratory, the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department and the Marine Conservation Society. Contractors are encouraged to publish their results in the open scientific literature; so far more than 30 such reports have been produced.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those areas where the dog whelk colonies are *(a)* on the increase and *(b)* in decline.

Mr. Maclean: The dog whelk is the species showing the greatest sensitivity to TBT in United Kingdom waters. Despite gradual improvements in water quality since TBT-based paints were banned for use on small boats and fish farming equipment in 1987, dog whelks have not yet shown significant increases in population density. However, there is some evidence of limited improvement of breeding capacity at sites in Scotland (monitored by the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department), on

the south coast, including the Isle of Wight (monitored by Plymouth marine laboratory) and more generally around the United Kingdom coast (at sites surveyed by the Marine Conservation Society).

Benzene Discharges

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate his Department has made of the likely effect on the level of benzene discharges as a result of increased use of recyclable plastic in vehicle production.

Mr. Maclean: No estimation has been made. The most significant sources of benzene are car exhausts and fuel evaporation.

Krypton

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he will take to ensure that the current discharge of krypton to the atmosphere by the British Nuclear Fuels Limited reprocessing plant at Sellafield is stopped; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Aerial discharges, including krypton, are subject to strict limits and conditions in the certificate of authorisation under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. The limits are set to ensure no member of the public receives a radiation dose as a result of these discharges in excess of the recommended safety levels.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are currently considering an application made by BNFL for the revision of this authorisation, I would not wish to pre-empt their deliberations nor the statutory public consultative process at this time.

Water Supplies

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what circumstances it is permissible for mains water supplies to be used for agricultural or horticultural purposes *(a)* under glass, *(b)* for market gardening and *(c)* for conventional agriculture, respectively; and under what statutory rule or guidance water authorities may issue licences for use of ground and surface water, respectively, for purposes *(b)* and *(c)*.

Mr. Maclean: The supply of mains water to customers is entirely a matter for water undertakers. Under section 55 of the Water Industry Act 1991 they must supply water to any non-domestic premises unless doing so would be unreasonbly expensive or would affect their duty to supply water to domestic premises. A mains supply to non-domestic premises may be used for any purpose unless specifically prohibited by the provisions of a drought order.

Licences for the abstraction of ground or surface water are issued by the National Rivers Authority, using the Water Resources (Licences) Regulations 1965 in conjunction with section 38 of the Water Resources Act 1991.

Burial Regulations

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of all those regulations that an individual has to comply with in order to arrange to be buried on land owned by that individual.

Mr. Robin Squire: No such regulations are necessary, but any individual considering such action should consult his local authority about a possible risk to public health. He should also comply with the Registration of Burials Act 1864.

Zoo Animals

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take, during the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community, to ensure that the best possible safeguards for the welfare of animals kept in zoos are included in the EC proposal for a directive laying down the minimum standards for such animals.

Mr. Maclean: The Government will continue to play an active and constructive role in the negotiations on the draft Zoos Directive with the intention of maintaining the high standards of care and accommodation already being set by zoos in this country under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981, and encouraging similar standards throughout the Community.

Mortgage Debt

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to meet the Council of Mortgage Lenders regarding assistance for householders whose outstanding mortgage debt exceeds the value of their houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Secretary of State for Social Security and the Secretary of State for Wales met mortgage lenders on 2 June to review progress on the package of measures agreed between the Government and the Council of Mortgage Lenders in December to reduce the number of repossessions. It was agreed that lenders should continue to look at the whole range of options available for addressing this problem, including formal mortgage to rent schemes, shared equity arrangements and more generous repayment terms. These measures will help those householders who are in arrears with their mortgage repayments.

For their part, the Government have enacted legislation for the direct payment to lenders of the mortgage interest element of income support, and has suspended until 19 August this year the requirement for stamp duty on transactions up to £250,000.

The Council of Mortgage Lenders estimates that the measures taken since December will save some 55,000 repossessions this year: 40,000 as a result of new procedures for dealing with arrears cases; and 15,000 as a result of the direct payment to lenders of the mortgage interest element of income support.

The combined effect of the measures taken by the Government and lenders will be to reduce the number of repossessions in 1992 and restore confidence to the housing market. Householders whose outstanding mortgage debt exceeds the value of their house will benefit from these measures, and from a revival of the housing market.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statistics he has on the number of households in each region where the mortgage debt outstanding exceeds the value of the house.

Mr. Baldry: The only information readily available relates to house purchases by first-time buyers. This has been published by the Council of Mortgage Lenders in the June issue of its newsletter, "Mortgage Monthly", which is held in the House of Commons Library.

Earth Summit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the proposals put forward by the United Kingdom on *(a)* reducing fossil fuel use, *(b)* nuclear power, *(c)* minimising and management of hazardous wastes and *(d)* protecting biodiversity at the United Nations conference on environment and development.

Mr. Maclean: The Government have played a full part in the negotiations on the climate change and biodiversity conventions, and supports the agenda 21 chapters on environmentally sound management of radioactive and hazardous wastes.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate the Government have made of the rate of extinction of endangered species if the biodiversity treaty is not signed.

Mr. Maclean: We do not yet have the technology or knowledge to estimate precisely the rate of species extinction, but some estimates suggest that there may be as many as 50 million species on earth of which, if present trends continue, up to one third could become extinct by 2025.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those countries which have agreed to sign the treaty on biodiversity at the Earth summit and those which have not.

Mr. Maclean: The convention on biological diversity will be open for signature from 5 June. We cannot speculate as to which countries will sign the convention, although we hope that the United Kingdom will be able to sign.

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the composition of the British delegation to the Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro with particular reference to the numbers representing local government.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom delegation will consist of the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Minister for Overseas Development, myself, and 30 officials from the Department of the Environment, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Overseas Development Agency, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Forestry Commission and from our diplomatic posts in Brazil. There are two local government representatives among the 12 observers who will form part of the United Kingdom delegation. The other observers represent environment and development groups, science, business, youth and trade unions.

Urban Programme

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the urban programme allocations to each urban programme authority for 1992-93.

Mr. Squire: Initial allocations to the urban programme authorities for 1992-93 were announced by my predecessor on 16 January 1992. Details are set out in the table.

Urban programme initial allocations 1992-93

	£ million
Newcastle/Gateshead	16·207
Hartlepool	2·017
Langbaurgh	2·050
Middlesbrough	5·156
North Tyneside	3·371
South Tyneside	4·756
Stockton	1·686
Sunderland	5·052
Manchester/Salford	20·789
Blackburn	3·819
Bolton	3·794
Burnley	2·111
Oldham	3·785
Preston	2·328
Rochdale	3·777
Wigan	2·638
Liverpool	18·278
Halton	1·466
Knowsley	3·984
St. Helens	1·794
Sefton	1·665
Wirral	3·548
Merseyside special allocation	1·000
Birmingham	22·496
Coventry	4·645
Dudley	1·561
Sandwell	4·642
Walsall	1·748
Wolverhampton	5·194
The Wrekin	0·961
Derby	1·359
Leicester	4·728
Nottingham	5·087
Barnsley	2·064
Bradford	4·491
Doncaster	2·225
Hull	4·884
Kirklees	1·083
Leeds	5·144
Rotherham	2·224
Sheffield	5·894
Hackney	5·393
Islington	8·550
Lambeth	8·452
Brent	2·660
Greenwich	1·534
Hammersmith and Fulham	2·515
Haringey	2·930
Kensington and Chelsea	1·765
Lewisham	2·550
Newham	3·100
Southwark	2·696
Tower Hamlets	4·500
Wandsworth	3·120
Bristol	1·635
Plymouth	1·318

Greenhouses Gases

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Her Majesty's Government's strategy to reduce concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom supports the ultimate objective of the framework convention on climate change which is to achieve stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the

climate system. The commitments in the convention on limiting greenhouse gas emissions would be an important first step towards this objective.

Acid Deposition

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the results of the national materials exposure programme; how many times the acid deposition building effects review group has met since the publication of its 1989 report; when the group will produce its next report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The acid deposition building effects review group last met in September 1991. There are no plans at this stage to produce a second report.

Results of the national materials exposure programme will be published in the July 1992 edition of the scientific journal *Atmospheric Environment*. A major review of the first four years of the NMEP programme is to be produced by the end of 1992.

Agenda 21

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evaluation he has made of the United Nations estimated figure of £125 billion per year needed to implement the agenda 21 proposals following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Maclean: The costs of implementing agenda 21 are indicative estimates prepared by the UNCED secretariat. These have not been considered by Governments. Additional financial help from developed countries will be needed, but the costs will depend on individual countries' circumstances and how they decide to implement the activities presented in agenda 21. The Government have argued that the resources from agenda 21 must come from resetting national spending priorities and from mainstream aid.

Vauxhall Cross and Millbank

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who will occupy the buildings at Vauxhall Cross and Thames house, Millbank, which are respectively under construction or being refurbished.

Mr. Howard: The Vauxhall Cross building is intended for occupation by the secret intelligence service. The building at Thames house, Millbank is intended principally for occupation by the security service.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Executive Agencies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in what circumstances questions by hon. Members seeking statistical information relating to services or benefits for which a next steps agency is responsible are *(a)* answered by Ministers and *(b)* referred to the agency's chief executive; and what assessment he has made of the consistency in the practice followed.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's policy on answering questions on agency matters was most recently set out in the Government's reply to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's 1991 report on the next steps initiative (Cm 1761), which said:

"In normal circumstances the source of the reply should follow the allocation of responsibilities as between the Secretary of State and the Chief Executive in the Agency's framework document; but in all cases the decision on who will respond rests with the Minister. The Government believes this is right and in accordance with important wider considerations about Ministerial accountability to Parliament. In time, as the system beds down, the Government expects that the cases which have given rise to concern will become fewer with any variations in practice kept to a minimum. The Governmennt will continue to keep the situation under review."

My Office has from time to time reminded Ministers of this policy. I have placed a copy of the current guidance in the Library.

HEALTH

Respiratory Illnesses

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence is available to the Department on the rate of hospital admissions of patients suffering from respiratory illnesses in the Greenwich health authority area by comparison with other health authority areas in London and in the south-east of England in the past two years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally.

Hospital Portering Services

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what initiatives she has to extend compulsory competitive tendering for hospital portering services; and what studies she has carried out of the costs and benefits involved.

Mr. Sackville: The Government's proposals to extend competitive tendering and other forms of market testing in the National Health Service were set out in the White Paper "Competing for Quality" published last November, a copy of which is available in the Library. The indications from the many health authorites who have market tested their portering services as a local initiative are that it leads to better specification of service, lower costs, and more flexible deployment of staff.

National Health Service Management

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to make public comments on the findings of the Tomlinson report on the future of the national health service management structure in London.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Bernard and his team are keeping my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Health and Education and myself fully informed as the inquiry progresses. We shall decide how and when a public announcement of their advice should be made when that advice has been formally presented.

Medicines Control Agency

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the key business targets for the Medicines Control Agency for 1992-93.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have today placed in the Library a copy of the 1992-93 key business targets for the Medicines Control Agency.

Children Act 1989

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received about Birmingham city council's use of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Yeo: Four letters have been received about the Children Act and its provisions for regulating day care services for young children.

Mental Health Act 1983

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her latest estimate of the number of social workers approved under the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not held centrally. Approval of social workers under the Mental Health Act 1983 is the responsibility of local authority social services departments.

Broadmoor Patients (Legal Protection)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many representations were made to her Department between 1985 and 1989 about the alleged failure of a certain consultant psychiatrist, whose name has been supplied to her, to comply with the requirements of part IV of the Mental Health Act 1983 in treating patients at Dorset house, Broadmoor special hospital; what was the nature of the alleged failures in compliance; what assessment was made of the validity of these representations; and what action was taken to ensure that all patients treated at Dorset house received the legal protection to which they were entitled under the Act;

(2) what assessment was made by the Mental Health Act Commission of the alleged failure of a certain consultant psychiatrist, whose name has been supplied to her, to comply with part IV of the Mental Health Act 1983 in treating patients at Dorset house, Broadmoor special hospital between 1985 and 1989;

(3) what were the circumstances and terms of the agreement under which a certain consultant psychiatrist, whose name has been supplied to her, ceased to be employed at Broadmoor hospital; what is his current employment; and what responsibilities this includes for persons detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 and treated under part IV of that Act.

Mr. Yeo: The consultant concerned took early retirement from Broadmoor hospital in December 1989. I cannot comment on representations or allegations about an individual employee or on the terms of any settlement which may have been agreed with that employee. His responsibilities in any subsequent national health service employment would be a matter for the employing body. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is required by section 120(1) of the Mental Health Act 1983 to keep under review the exercise of the powers and the discharge of the duties conferred or imposed by the Act relating to the detention of patients or to patients liable to be detained under the Act. This function is performed on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's behalf by the Mental Health Act Commission as required by section 121(2) of the Act. Throughout the period from 1985 to 1989 Dorset house was visited regularly by members of the Commission. Their findings were reported to the Department which considered them and took action as necessary (from 1 October 1989 this became the direct responsibility of the newly-established Special Hospitals Service Authority).

Residential Care

Mrs. Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will establish a forum of residential care organisations to develop policy on residential care.

Mr. Yeo: We shall be giving careful consideration to all the recommendations contained in Lady Howe's report on residential care which are relevant to the Department.

Mapperley Hospital

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made on the closure of Mapperley hospital.

Mr. Sackville: The closure of Mapperley hospital is a matter for the district health authority. The hon. Member can obtain a detailed report by writing to the district chairman.

EC Presidency

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the Department's priorities are for the United Kingdom presidency of the EC.

Dr. Mawhinney: We will seek to increase inter-governmental co-operation on public health issues and take forward specific measures within the Health Council to promote health and to prevent disease.

Dental Treatment

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dental surgeries offered treatment within the national health service in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is collected on the number of dentists, rather than the number of dental surgeries. The number of dentists practising in the general dental services for each of the years requested is shown in the table.

Year	*Number of dentists*
30 September 1979	12,146
30 September 1983	13,672
30 September 1987	14,765
30 March 1992	15,532

There are 27 per cent. more dentists in the general dental services than in 1979 providing more than 7 million more courses of adult dental treatment, an increase of 43 per cent.

"A Scandal Waiting to Happen"

Mr. Heppell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has made to the Royal College of Nursing in respect of the document, "A Scandal Waiting to Happen".

Mr. Yeo: We are considering the report.

AIDS

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action the Council of Health Ministers decided to take on the Commission's report on AIDS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Commission's report on the "Europe against AIDS" programme has not yet been finalised. The report is expected to be ready for submission to the Council of Health Ministers in late 1992-early 1993.

Cancer Research

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department has provided to the United Kingdom Co-ordinating Committee on Cancer Research for its study into the causes of cancer, involving childhood leukaemia and other childhood cancers, pertaining to benzene-related situations.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* The Department has not provided nor been requested to provide any information on benzene-related situations to the United Kingdom Co-ordinating Committee on Cancer Research for its study into causes of cancer, involving childhood leukaemia and other childhood cancers.

DEFENCE

Warsaw Pact

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent meetings his Department has held with military officials from countries of the former Warsaw pact; what information was exchanged; and what was the cost to his Department of the meetings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence is continuing its policy of steadily building up military contacts with the countries of the former Warsaw pact, both bilaterally and under the auspices of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC). The seminar on the democratic management of defence, held at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) on 18 and 19 May, provided our most recent opportunity for contacts with military officials from the former Soviet republics and the countries of central and eastern Europe. In the margins of the seminar, Colonel General Omelichev, vice chief of the CIS Armed Forces, paid a call on the Chief of the General Staff; and, I received Lt. General Zhivitsa, Chief of Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Both calls provided a valuable opportunity for an exchange of views on the current situation in the CIS and eastern Europe. The final costs of these meetings are not yet available, but are expected to be minimal.

Military Exhibitions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance is afforded by United Kingdom military attachés to British Army and military equipment manufacturers attending military equipment and arms exhibitions in states where they are posted.

Mr. Aitken: United Kingdom service attachés can provide visiting British military equipment manufacturers with advice and introductions as appropriate. This assistance is not limited to attendance at arms and equipment exhibitions.

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate made by Her Majesty's Government of Iraq's nearness to being able to build nuclear weapons before the Gulf war, based on information made available by the United Nations special inspection commission in Iraq.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The International Atomic Energy Authority's sixth nuclear inspection team found incontrovertible evidence that Iraq had developed a crude nuclear warhead design. But for the military action against Iraq initiated by the United Nations, Iraq could have had its first nuclear weapon by 1993.

Army Apprentices

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on rationalising the training of Army apprentices.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Command Paper 1595 referred to proposals to restructure the Army's training organisation and I announced (in the House on 10 March this year) that from September 1992 we shall introduce a one year standard foundation course at each of the existing Army apprentice colleges in place of the current two-year course.

We now propose that all apprentices should undertake a common one-year foundation course at a single Army technical college, with one wing at Arborfield for the technical corps and another at Aldershot for the Army Catering Corps and Adjutant General's Corps.

I have already announced the proposal to concentrate the training of junior leaders at Harrogate. No final decision has been taken on possible future uses for the remaining college at Chepstow (although it is one of several locations being considered for use by the field Army).

It is too early to say what the detailed implications will be for the staff of the establishments affected. Full consultation with the trades unions will take place in the normal way before final decisions are taken.

SCOTLAND

Johnstone North Industrial Improvement Area

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to establish an initiative to develop the Johnstone north industrial improvement area as a magnet for inward investment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The question of support for local area initiatives such as the Johnstone north industrial improvement area is essentially a matter for local bodies such as the local enterprise company and local authorities. I understand that the area to which the hon. Member refers is a work improvement area organised by the district council, which has broad powers to support and encourage investment and development. The local enterprise company for the area, Renfrewshire Enterprise, has no proposals to afford the

area special status; but it has a range of advice and assistance available for businesses wishing to invest or relocate in the area.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cambodia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support Her Majesty's Government have provided for mine-clearing operations in Cambodia from 1988 to date; and if he will give details of Her Majesty's Government's plans for the years 1992-93 in this respect.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 4 June. In addition to our substantial contribution in terms of both money and men through the United Nations, we gave £60,000 in financial year 1991-92 to the HALO Trust to help its mine survey work in Cambodia on behalf of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. This year, we have offered to provide a further £150,000 subject to the HALO Trust raising matching funds.

High Technology Exports

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent proposals have been received from the United States Government on the establishment of a multilateral co-operation council to control high technology export involving member countries of the COCOM group and states from the former Warsaw pact.

Mr. Douglas-Hogg: COCOM countries have been considering how to respond to the collapse of the Warsaw pact and the break-up of the Soviet Union. In this context the US Government recently proposed the creation of an informal body in which COCOM members could enter into a dialogue with states of the former Warsaw pact on the control of sensitive technologies.

At a high level meeting of COCOM on 1 June, member countries decided to invite those COCOM-proscribed destinations which have embarked on political reform to join them in an informal COCOM co-operation forum on export controls. The primary objective of the forum will be to encourage countries to implement effective export controls, with a view to providing them with significantly wider access to COCOM-controlled goods and technology.

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) *Official Report*, 14 May, columns 191-92, if he will give details of each of the 29 items of equipment connected to the nuclear weapons programme in Iraq which are in the possession of Her Majesty's Government; and if he will list the origin of each item of such equipment known to date by the Government.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The 29 items referred to in my answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 14 May at columns *191-92* relate to the weaponisation part of the Iraqi nuclear programme.

Consolidated details of these are contained in the report of the International Atomic Energy Authority's 11th inspection which will be placed in the Library of the House.

Maxwell Companies

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he will make to the Liechtenstein Government to facilitate the work of the investigators of the Maxwell companies' collapse in seeking to identify the extent and location of relevant funds deposited in Liechtenstein banks.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Investigations into the collapse of companies connected with the late Robert Maxwell are under way. I have no plans to make representations to the Government of Liechtenstein on this matter.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

European Community

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what method he proposes to use to maximise policy co-ordination in reviewing policy and area boundaries and designation for regional policy purposes between Her Majesty's Government and the Commission of the European Communities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The appropriate degree of co-ordination could best be assured if, in future, areas eligible for the European regional development fund were selected by the member states, subject to certain limits and conditions laid down in Council regulations.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with the Commissioner for Regional Policy of the European Commission concerning the *(a)* criteria, *(b)* time scale and *(c)* completion date of the redrawing of the assisted area map of the United Kingdom; and what weight is proposed to be given to current defence dependency in designation as an assisted area.

Mr. Sainsbury: No consultation has taken place with the Commissioner for Regional Policy of the European Commission specifically about the review of the assisted areas map. In the review of the map the problems and needs of all areas, including areas with heavy dependence on a particular sector, will be carefully considered.

Genetic Information (Patenting)

Mr. Gapes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the Government's policy towards proposals for the patenting of life forms and genetic information.

Mr. Leigh: Under our current legislation, inventions relating to life forms and genetic information are, in general, patentable provided that they satisfy the normal requirements—that they are novel, not obvious and industrially applicable. Plant and animal varieties are, however, specifically excluded from patentability. The Government have no plans to change the legislation.

Company Legislation

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to revise the current companies legislation to *(a)* ensure the granting of speaking rights to proxies and *(b)* require each major company to include on its board of directors an individual whose responsibilities specifically cover equal opportunities.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: There are no proposals to extend the speaking rights of proxies beyond the present ones contained in the Companies Act 1985. In the case of a private company a proxy has under section 372 of the Companies Act 1985 the same right as a member to speak at a meeting; a public company can if it wishes to grant speaking rights to proxies through its articles of association; nor is there any intention to require companies to have a director whose responsibilities specifically cover equal opportunities, as the directors of the company all share responsibility for ensuring that the company complies with its statutory obligations on equal opportunities as well as on the other legislative requirements that apply to it. There is nothing to stop a company allocating specific responsibility for equal opportunities to a particular director on a voluntary basis.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what level of regional financial assistance has been made available to each intermediate and development area in each year since the last revision of the assisted areas map in 1984.

Mr. Sainsbury: Expenditure on regional financial assistance in the standard regions of Great Britain broken down into development areas and intermediate areas is set out in the following table. The schemes covered in the table are regional development grants, regional selective assistance and regional enterprise grants. A more detailed breakdown by assisted area is available only at disproportionate cost.

Regional financial assistance

£ million

	1984-85		*1985-86*		*1986-87*		*1987-88*		*1988-89*		*1989-90*		*1990-91*		*1991-92*	
	DA	*IA*	*DA*	*IA*	*DA*	*IA*	*DA*	*IA*	*DA*	*IA*	*DA*	*IA*	*DA*	*IA*	*DA*	*IA*
East Midlands	9·7	1·7	8·0	0·8	10·2	0·5	8·6	0·8	8·2	0·6	8·8	0·6	5·1	0·4	2·2	0·4
Northern	106·1	1·1	84·4	1·1	116·0	4·4	84·2	2·5	113·8	3·6	97·6	2·2	63·4	3·3	45·3	1·2
North West	93·1	3·1	72·1	4·3	114·6	6·0	58·4	7·1	57·6	10·0	50·6	10·8	39·0	8·4	29·0	8·7
South West	11·8	0·3	10·6	0·8	19·9	0·9	9·2	2·2	8·1	3·2	5·9	2·7	3·3	2·9	3·2	3·5
West Midlands	—	—	—	6·2	—	10·4	—	18·8	—	25·2	—	19·8	—	18·0	—	8·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	32·0	6·3	28·7	4·8	30·0	7·8	21·3	10·8	31·5	9·3	13·9	8·5	12·4	6·8	5·4	7·0
England	252·7	12·5	203·8	18·0	290·7	30·0	181·7	42·2	219·2	51·9	176·8	44·6	123·2	39·8	85·1	29·5
Scotland	137·3	3·6	150·9	4·7	199·7	5·9	108·8	7·5	107·5	7·4	96·0	6·3	102·6	10·4	69·2	9·4
Wales	110·4	1·7	104·4	2·5	112·2	4·1	75·4	6·3	82·9	12·2	49·1	16·6	37·5	16·3	49·5	21·9
Great Britain	500·4	17·8	459·1	25·2	602·6	40·0	365·9	56·0	409·6	71·5	321·9	67·5	263·3	66·5	203·8	60·8

Note: The table comprises expenditure on Regional Development Grants, Regional Selective Assistance and Regional Enterprise Grants.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what level of regional financial assistance was made available to each of the standard United Kingdom regions in each year since 1978-79, *(a)* at net prices and *(b)* at 1978-79 prices.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information on regional financial assistance from 1978-79 at current prices and at 1978-79 prices is set out in the tables. The expenditure is gross of recoveries. Regional information on a net basis is not readily available.

Table 1
Government expenditure on regional financial assistance to industry at current prices[1]

£ million

Region	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Northern	158·8	151·2	150·8	178·3	159·7	130·2	125·5	96·6	137·3	109·3	134·1	117·0	85·0	63·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	37·4	34·1	52·4	62·1	53·5	36·3	44·3	36·4	41·9	38·8	50·2	32·4	29·4	18·2
East Midlands	3·4	4·4	4·7	9·4	13·8	17·5	11·4	8·8	10·7	9·4	8·8	9·5	5·5	2·6
South West	9·6	11·1	12·5	14·9	16·6	12·1	14·6	12·3	23·0	14·8	14·7	10·7	9·0	8·3
West Midlands[2,3]	0·2	0·1	0·1	—	—	—	—	7·1	10·6	19·3	26·2	19·9	18·0	8·7
North West	[3]114·1	[3]96·1	[3]136·5	[3]174·9	[3]124·8	[3]104·2	106·4	87·5	129·6	79·0	82·3	74·3	57·5	49·5
England	323·5	297·0	357·0	439·6	368·4	300·3	302·2	248·7	353·1	270·6	316·3	263·8	204·4	151·1
Wales	132·1	112·9	175·3	197·5	182·1	120·0	147·5	138·4	150·7	132·4	148·2	131·7	133·7	153·9
Scotland	156·1	135·2	194·5	232·5	369·4	228·6	187·1	197·0	242·4	153·2	151·2	144·6	159·1	135·4
Great Britain	611·7	545·1	726·8	869·6	919·9	648·9	636·8	584·1	746·2	556·2	615·7	540·1	497·2	440·4
Northern Ireland	102·6	108·3	142·5	115·7	153·6	115·0	141·5	158·7	146·7	127·2	125·9	124·7	131·1	137·7
United Kingdom	714·3	653·4	869·3	985·3	1,073·5	763·9	778·3	742·8	892·9	683·4	741·6	664·8	628·3	578·1

Table 2

Government expenditure on regional financial assistance to industry at 1978-79 prices[1,4]

£ million

Region	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Northern	158·8	129·6	109·2	117·8	98·5	76·7	70·4	51·4	70·7	53·4	61·1	50·0	33·6	23·6
Yorkshire and Humberside	37·4	29·2	37·9	41·0	33·0	21·4	24·9	19·4	21·6	18·9	22·9	13·8	11·6	6·7
East Midlands	3·4	3·8	3·4	6·2	8·5	10·3	6·4	4·7	5·5	4·6	4·0	4·1	2·2	1·0
South West	9·6	9·5	9·1	9·8	10·2	7·1	8·2	6·5	11·8	7·2	6·7	4·6	3·6	3·0
West Midlands[2,3]	0·2	0·1	—	—	—	—	—	3·8	5·5	9·4	11·9	8·5	7·1	3·2
North West	[5]114·1	[5]82·3	[5]98·8	[5]115·5	[5]76·9	[5]61·4	59·7	46·5	66·7	38·6	37·5	31·8	22·7	18·3
England	323·5	254·5	258·4	290·3	227·1	176·9	169·6	132·3	181·8	132·1	144·1	112·7	80·8	55·8
Wales	132·1	96·7	126·9	130·4	112·3	70·7	82·8	73·6	77·6	64·6	67·5	56·3	52·8	56·8
Scotland	156·1	115·9	140·8	153·6	227·7	134·7	105·0	104·8	124·8	74·8	68·9	61·8	62·8	50·0
Great Britain	611·7	467·1	526·1	574·3	567·1	382·3	357·4	310·7	384·2	271·5	280·5	230·8	196·4	162·6
Northern Ireland	102·6	92·8	103·2	76·4	94·7	67·8	79·4	84·4	75·5	62·1	57·3	53·3	51·8	50·8
United Kingdom	714·3	559·9	629·3	650·7	661·8	450·1	436·8	395·1	459·7	333·6	337·8	284·1	248·2	213·4

Table 3

Index	*1978-79 prices*
1978-79	100·0
1979-80	116·7
1980-81	138·1
1981-82	151·4
1982-83	162·2
1983-84	169·7
1984-85	178·2
1985-86	188·0
1986-87	194·2
1987-88	204·8
1988-89	219·6
1989-90	234·0
1990-91	253·2
1991-92	270·9
1992-93	283·1
1993-94	292·9
1994-95	301·8

Notes:

[1]All figures are gross and include payments to Nationalised Industries.

[2]Includes some minor expenditure in West Midlands in respect of Oswestry TTWA which ceased to be an Assisted Area in 1982-83.

[3]Certain TTWAs in the West Midlands were designated as Assisted Areas on 29 November 1984.

[4]Expenditure on a 1978-79 price basis for each year is calculated by applying the appropriate deflator to expenditure at current prices.

[5]Includes expenditure in Cumbria, otherwise shown within the totals for Northern Region.

The items included in the expenditure are Regional Development Grants, Regional Selective Assistance and Regional Enterprise Grants; expenditure on Land and Factories by the English Industrial Estates Corporation, the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies, the Development Board for Rural Wales, and the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Northern Ireland has a different range of financial incentives available and the items included are Industrial Development Board grants and loans, expenditure on land and factories, Standard Capital Grants and Local Enterprise Development Unit grants and loans.

Milford Docks Company

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will outline (i) the options available to him and (ii) the action he intends to take following the report of inspectors appointed by him to investigate the Milford Docks Company under section 432(2) of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The report of the Milford inspectors was published on 16 January 1992 thereby putting the inspectors' findings into the public domain. Copies have been provided to the Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Law Society and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors for them to consider the reported conduct of their members. After considering legal advice it is not proposed to institute proceedings under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986.

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OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 208**

SESSION 1992–93

18th May—5th June 1992

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

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Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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